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**SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE Mk.VIII**

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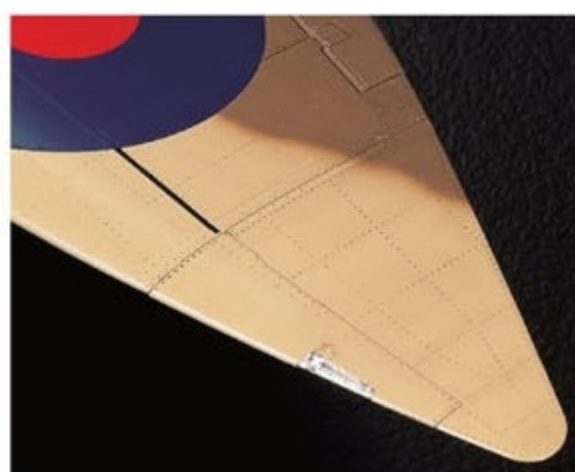
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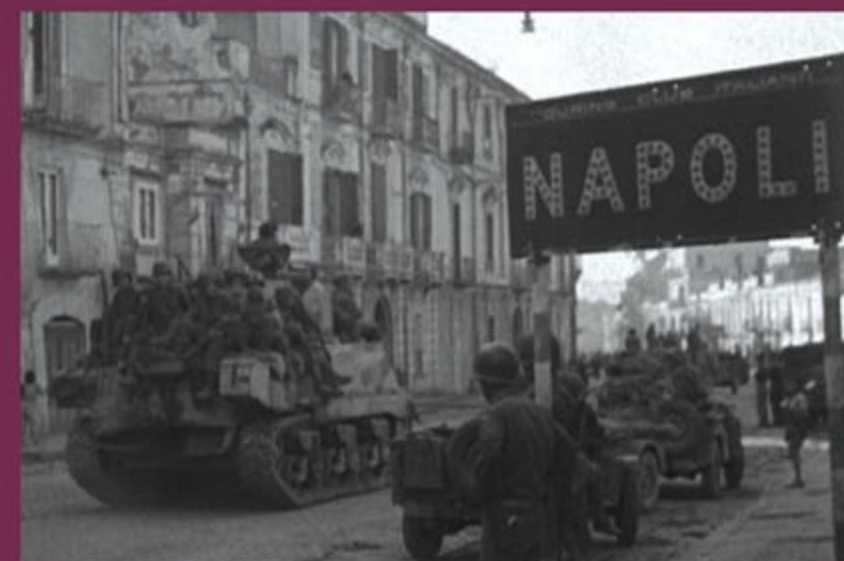
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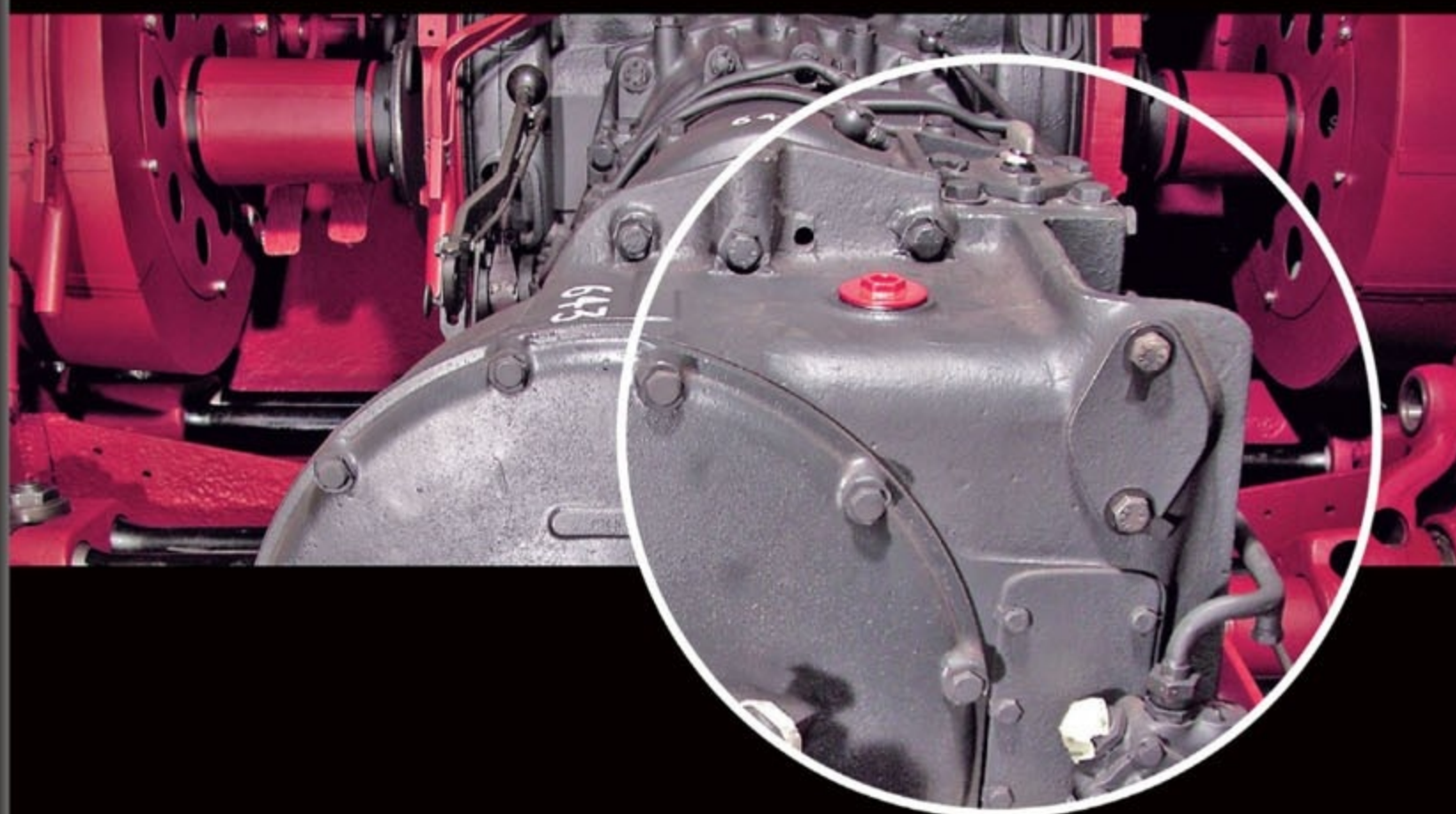
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# THE ULTIMATE PANTHER GUIDE

## THE RESEARCH SQUAD



## panther project

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The Research Squad (Lee Lloyd, Alisdair Johnson, Brian Balkwill) share a common passion to the preservation and restoration of items of historical interest. To this end we are working with The Wheatcroft Collection to publish a series of books on significant items and restoration projects. These include a Panther Tank, and S130, the last remaining German S-boat.

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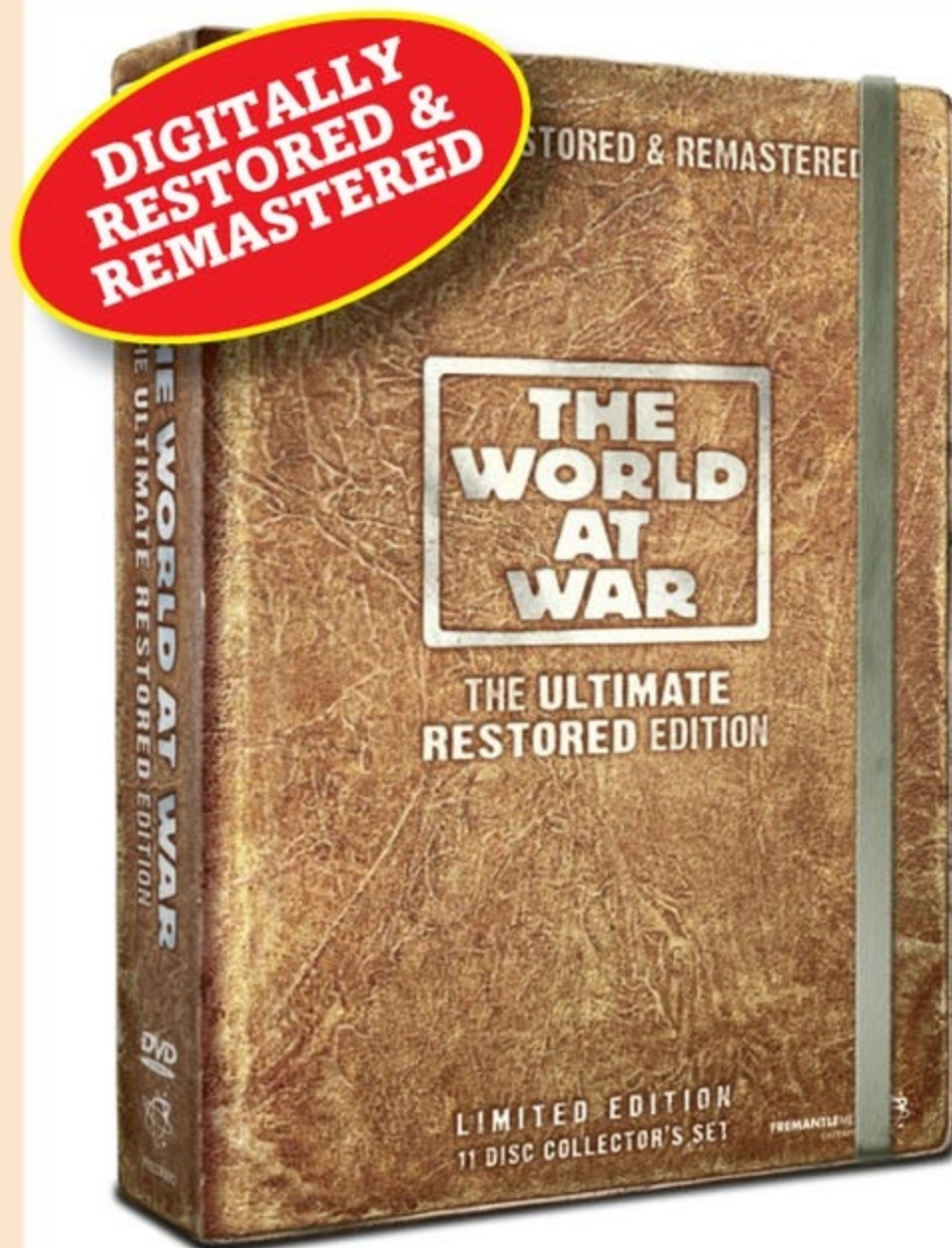
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# Readers' Letters

MI readers are invited to write to the Editor. Letters should be addressed to: Tim Newark, Military Illustrated, 3 Barton Buildings, off Queen Square, Bath BA1 2JR. E-mail: [timn@fsmail.net](mailto:timn@fsmail.net)



## Enter this fantastic free competition now!



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Thanks to FremantleMedia, Military Illustrated readers have the opportunity to win two DVD box sets of 'The World at War' in High Definition on Blu-Ray and DVD, recently released. This landmark series has been painstakingly digitally restored and re-mastered over two years with 5.1 sound and 16.9 presentation and English subtitling for the first time.

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### Mystery postcard

A German friend of mine recently purchased a postcard. The description purported to show a 'gefangener englischer Fliegeroffizier', meaning a 'captured English flying officer'. However, the scene shown in the photograph raises a number of questions. Firstly, the captured 'Englishman' shown is wearing the uniform of a lance corporal of a unit that is of neither the RFC or later RAF. He has a Lee Enfield slung on his right shoulder.

Of the German officers in the photograph, two appear to be uhlans and one (possibly) from another cavalry regiment. Two are wearing spurs and two are holding cameras. Finally in spite of one of the Germans having a weapon (a Gewehr 98.) the scene seems totally relaxed with even the 'Englishman' looking self possessed and unconcerned. The postcard was issued by M (Max) Pache, Kunstanstalt und Postkartenverlag of Achern in Baden. On the back



of the card is the handwritten (in old German words) 'gef. Eng. Fliegeroffz.' I am writing to ask what your readers can make of this.  
*Paul Leaman, Wetherby*

[www.TimNewark.com](http://www.TimNewark.com)



Cover: German soldiers near Minsk, July 1944.

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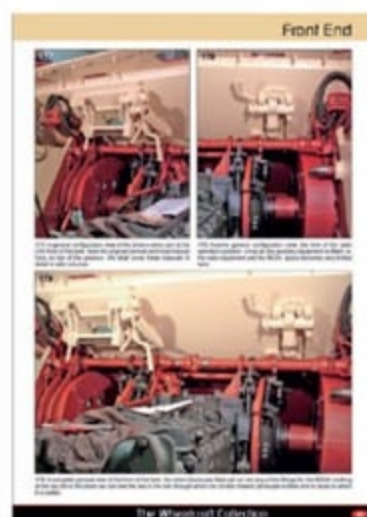
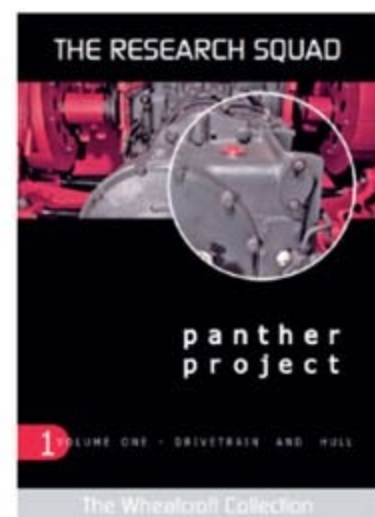
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The Research Squad share a common passion to the preservation and restoration of items of historical interest. Our aim is to professionally research, document and publish studies on historically significant subjects in a variety of media. To this end we are currently working with The Wheatcroft Collection to publish a series of books on significant items and restoration projects.

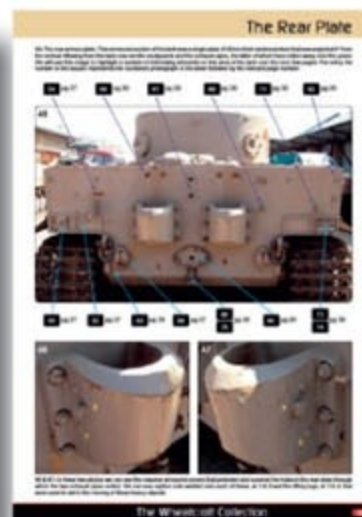
One such exciting project is the restoration of S130, the last remaining WW2 Schnellboot. In partnership with Military Modelling International we will be bringing regular updates on the projects to the magazine.

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When Marshal Georgi Zhukov entered liberated Minsk he barely recognised the city, such was the destruction.

# ESCAPE FROM MINSK

Following a series of sledgehammer blows, Stalin surrounded his Nazi foe in White Russia. ANTHONY TUCKER-JONES reveals how Hitler's generals, trapped south of Minsk, struggled desperately to escape the Red Army's fatal embrace.

**T**he sound of rifle and machinegun fire rattled around the woods bordering the lakes and marshes. The hunters were relentlessly closing in on their prey. German troops fleeing south glanced nervously back across their shoulders. It was the sporadic nature of the gunfire that made it so unnerving. Continual shooting indicated a battle; these stuttering shots indicated something far worse. Every now and then a group of dispirited men knee deep in water would throw down their weapons and raise their hands in futile surrender. The pursuing Red Army had no time for such niceties and simply shot most of them out of hand and moved on. There was no one to witness the Germans' miserable fate in the dense forests of Byelorussia. Escape

from Minsk proved impossible for tens of thousands of hapless Germans.

## Give chase

Although at the end of June 1944, Adolf Hitler and his cronies had grasped that Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's offensive in Byelorussia was clearly not a localised operation or a diversion, concern that the Red Army might strike in Ukraine and the distraction of the fighting in Normandy ensured only limited reinforcements for Army Group Centre. Due to Hitler's steadfast refusal to allow an orderly fighting withdrawal, all those men fleeing the advancing hordes of the Red Army were soon a demoralised and disorganised shambles.

That May, Stalin clarified the roles of his four front commanders tasked with

clearing Byelorussia or White Russia. Generals KK Rokossovsky and ID Chernyakovsky's 1st and 3rd Byelorussian Fronts' primary role was the liberation of the city of Minsk; General GF Zakharov's 2nd Byelorussian Front was to give chase, once a breakthrough was achieved to prevent the Germans catching their breath and putting together either a defence or launching a counter-attack.

Stalin and his generals massed a mighty steel fist with which to punch through to Minsk. By the beginning of 1944, despite massive losses at Kursk and in Ukraine, thanks to Soviet industry the Red Army was still able to field over 5,300 tanks and self-propelled guns. For the Byelorussian offensive, Stalin was to commit the bulk of his armoured forces including five tank armies plus ten separate tank and





**The 1,800 strong Minsk garrison was not enough to hold the city in the face of the Red Army. All it could do was cover the desperate German evacuation westward.**

mechanised corps.

Marshal Georgi Zhukov, over seeing Rokossovsky and Zakharov's operations recalled that all the Fronts were to be reinforced with additional tank corps: 'The 1st Baltic Front was given the 1st Tank Corps, while the 3rd Byelorussian Front was reinforced by the 11th Guards Army and the 2nd Guards Tank Corps. The 28th Army, the 9th and 1st Guards Tank Corps, the 1st Mechanised and the 4th Guards Cavalry Corps were concentrated on the right wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front. The 5th Guards Tank Army – a reserve of the Supreme Command – was being concentrated in the area of the 3rd Byelorussian Front.'

By 1944, the view was that the Soviet Union's tanks were as good as anyone else's, indeed many Germans felt they were in fact better. During the spring of that year Soviet Guards armoured brigades were issued with the very first new T-34/85s. Once production was in full swing, it became the standard medium tank in all armoured units, although the T-34/76 remained in

general service. While many units were re-equipped for the coming Bagration offensive, they did not get the T-34/85, instead having to make do with the earlier 76.2mm armed version.

At the beginning of 1943, Stalin took the decision to create five standardised tank armies, all of which took part in the battle of Kursk. In January 1944, a sixth tank army was formed. The six tank armies had nearly forty armoured corps. Typically a Soviet Tank Army comprised two-three tank corps and an optional mechanised corps. With all the supporting arms, this provided up to 50,000 men with up to 650 tanks and up to 850 guns and mortars

### **Partisan brigade**

Following a bombardment of unimaginable scale, Stalin's Operation Bagration opened at 0500 on 23 June 1944 by steamrolling into General Han's Traut's 78th Assault Division. His powerful command consisted of 5,700 men supported by nearly 50 assault and self-propelled guns who were holding the

vital Smolensk-Minsk-Moscow Highway. Even so, General KN Galitsky's 11th Guards Army turned his flank and pushed his 2nd Guard Tank Corps through the gap. With Traut's men being slowly overwhelmed, the German 27th Corps was forced to fall back on the Dnepr. Just three days later, the Red Army swarmed into the city of Orsha, which lay to the southwest of Traut's positions.

However, the presence of 5th Panzer on the Moscow-Minsk highway forced Chernyakovsky to redirect his armoured forces, 29th Tank Corps and 3rd Mechanised Corps, north of the city. In the meantime, the rest of Marshal PA Rotmistriv's powerful 5th Tank Army fought its way down the highway. At the same time, 2nd Tank Corps reaching the west bank of the Berezina, near Murovo, began driving on Minsk from the south.

On the Berezina, near the villages of Brod and Sinichino, the Zheleznyak Partisan brigade held a ten mile (17km) wide bridgehead and helped General AA Aslanov's 35th Guards Tank Brigade from the 3rd Mechanised Corps build





**On 5 July 1944, elements of the trapped German 4th and 9th armies attempted to escape the Minsk pockets; 12th Corps fought north-west while 27th Corps headed west. Note the youth of these soldiers.**

bridges in order to get their tanks over the river. The second phase of the battle for Byelorussia commenced three days later with the crossing of the Berezina and the opening of the attack on Polotsk and Rokossovsky's thrust to outflank Minsk from the southwest.

Army Group Centre's combat diary noted with an undue air of optimism on the 30th: 'Today, for the first time in the nine day battle of Byelorussia, there was some relief from the tension. The enemy did indeed occupy Sluzk after a see-saw battle, however, they were tied down there by the tenacious resistance offered by the weak German forces committed there, which allowed us to make use of the time to unload operational reserves, which had arrived in the Baranovichi area. Also, the enemy mobile formations, which were attacking through Borisov toward Minsk, ran into strong resistance on the Berezina; one of the enemy groups advancing through Bogoml was thrown back...'

Also, that day with the collapse of Army Group Centre seemingly halted, Field Marshal Walter Model who had been rushed in by Hitler to try and retrieve the situation, issued his orders: 4th Army's divisions move immediately behind the Berezina; 9th Army to stop the enemy in front of Minsk; 2nd Army

hold the Sulzk-Baranovichi area and 4th Panzer Army (Army Group North Ukraine), take over the defence of the Brest-Litovsk area. To the northwest of Minsk, 5th Panzer Division and the Tiger tanks of the Heavy Tank Battalion 505 did all they could to hold off Rotmistrov's encroaching 5th Guards during the first few days of July.

Rotmistrov's 3rd Cavalry Corps by 2 July had raced 75 miles (120km) to reach the area of Vileika and Molodechno north of Minsk. Notably the latter sat astride the strategic Minsk-Vilnius railway and on the same date one of the two cavalry corps from Rokossovsky's Front cut the line from Minsk southwest to Baranovichi. Rapidly, the Byelorussian capital was being cut off from the outside world. German resistance to the east and southeast of Minsk had also collapsed by the 2nd.

On this occasion, Model was unable to work his usual miracles and had to face up to the fact that he did not have the resources to cling on to Minsk or indeed save many of the trapped troops of 4th and 9th armies. Even juggling units from Army Group North Ukraine, which Model now had the luxury of doing as he commanded both Army Groups; he still did not have sufficient manpower to bring

Stalin to a halt in Byelorussia.

Model knew there was little chance of getting the remains of 4th Army to Minsk, the latter was being threatened from both the north and south and the Berezina had been breached west of Lepel. Unlike Hitler, Model cared little about the defence of the Byelorussian capital, what was more important was to keep open the escape routes to the northwest and southwest to save his troops.

Army Group Centre had no real reserves that it could draw on in the Minsk area. Rear echelon security forces used for anti-partisan operations were little better than brutal thugs, who would not stand up to the Red Army. Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, provided some reinforcements drawing on the Colonel Oskar Dirlwanger and Brigadier Bratislav Kaminski's brigades, though these were little better than lightly armed anti-partisan militias. Two infantry divisions, provided by Army Group North, were instructed by Army Group Centre to assist in the defence of Minsk.

### **Hated brigade**

Kaminski's forces also included Byelorussian police of dubious loyalty. He was a Red Army deserter, who had governed Lokot Province behind Army





A dug in German machinegun team awaits Stalin's summer offensive. Within two weeks, the Red Army sliced through the Eastern Front and reached the Byelorussian capital of Minsk.

Group Centre lines from 1942-44, keeping it free from partisans. His hated brigade contributed to the deaths of 7,000 people in 1944 during a series of brutal operations.

Gottberg's command ended up with responsibility for the Anhalt and Flörke battle groups. In addition to these ad hoc formations was Kampfgruppe Lindig, incorporating elements of 12th Panzer and the 390th Field Training Division. To the south, the crossing points on the Berezina were guarded by Kampfgruppe Anhalt, consisting of a number of police and security detachments, and elements of Müller's 12th Corps, which had fallen back on the town of Berezino.

The main elements of Kampfgruppe von Saucken sought to screen Minsk from the north-west where the 5th Guards Tank Army was rapidly threatening to cut the railway lines. The fighting was bitter and within a week the Tigers claimed 128 Soviet armoured vehicles and 5th Panzer another 167. This success came at a price—by the 8th, all the Tigers had been lost and 5th Panzer had just 18 tanks left. Having done all they could, von Saucken and the 5th Panzer were ordered to fall back towards Molodechno to the north-west of Minsk.

Gottberg, after reporting that the defences of Minsk were crumbling, withdrew his Kampfgruppe toward

Lida east of Minsk, from where he would retreat yet again without orders. Kampfgruppe von Gottberg found itself in to the path of the advancing Red Army east of Minsk along a line Smilovici – Smolevici – Logojsk on 4 July.

Model now desperately put together a defensive line west of Minsk between Baranovichi and Moledetchno, notably the 5th Panzer Division was on the Vilnius rail line north of Minsk, 12th Panzer was to the southwest, while the 4th Panzer and 28th Jaeger divisions were before Baranovichi and the 170th Infantry had dug in around Moledetchno. The idea was that that this line would be held until those forces trapped at Minsk could fight their way out.

Rokossovsky's 1st Guards Tank Corps followed Chernyakovsky's armour to Minsk from the southeast. The 4th German Army now found itself being squeezed by seven tank, motorised and cavalry corps around the city. In the meantime, other troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front were chasing the Germans toward Pukhovichi-Minsk and Slutsk-Baranovichi.

On the first route, the Germans resisted fiercely, particularly along the Svisloch River where the 12th Panzer Division was deployed. Resistance was also encountered in the Slutsk area, although by the nightfall of 4 July Soviet

troops were well beyond Baranovichi. The fleeing Germans, fearful of taking to the partisan infested forests clung to the roads, much to the satisfaction of the Soviet 4th and 16th Air armies which set about decimating the exposed columns.

Fortress or Fester Platz Minsk was held by a mixture of units, including elements of 5th Panzer. The defenders' priority, regardless of Hitler's grand designs, was to get the wounded and administrative staff out and to hold the railway open for as long as physically possible. The situation in the city was grim, especially as it was full of non-combatant rear echelon staff and demoralised stragglers separated from their parent units.

### Train westward

The garrison, just 1,800 strong, had the unenviable task of protecting 12,000 support staff, 8,000 wounded and 15,000 unarmed stragglers. Everyone had one thing on their minds—getting on a train westward. In total, 53 trains were available in Minsk and, on 1 and 2 July, many wounded and support staffs were successfully shipped out. They were the lucky ones; apart from the threat of air attack they were relatively safe.

The process of blowing up key installations commenced on the 1st and Hitler belatedly gave permission to start the evacuation the following evening.



The garrison began to systematically demolish Minsk in anticipation of being thrown out by the liberating Red Army. Marshal Zhukov realised urgent action was needed: 'The Byelorussian partisans operating in the Minsk area informed us that the Government House, the buildings of the republican Party Central Committee and the Officers' House were being hastily mined for demolition before retreat. To save the city's biggest buildings, we decided to accelerate the advance of our armoured troops...'

Once past 5th Panzer, the Soviet 2nd Guards Tank Corps broke into the

### Gigantic Mousetrap

Once inside Minsk, Red Army War correspondent Vasily Grossman recorded the shattered detritus of city life left by the Nazis: 'Fire in the districts close to the river: hundreds of thousands of people who have lost all their possessions in the fire are sitting on their bundles. Armchairs, paintings, deer's heads with horns; girls holding kittens.' After interviewing captured German officers he wrote: 'Few believed they'd manage to hold the line. More often, they speak about the gigantic Byelorussian mousetrap.'

Once in full flight from Minsk and the surrounding towns and villages the Wehrmacht abandoned everything. It was not long before the liberating troops were enjoying the spoils of war left behind. 'I was saturated with French cognac,' recalled Red Army Officer Lev Kopelev. 'My shoulder bag was stuffed with Havana cigars. They made you dizzy at first; then you got used to it. The constant inebriation from cognacs, schnapps and liqueurs, and the biting smoke of those powerful cigars seemed to steady us against the nastiness of what was going on all around.'

southern outskirts at 0200 on 3 July. The corps' 4th Guards Tank Brigade loaded with tank riders burst through the remaining defences. They were followed by Rokossovsky's 1st Guards Tank Corps, which attacked from the southeast. At the same time, Rotmistrov's 5th Tank Army appeared north of Minsk and moved north-easterly to cut the road from Minsk to the northwest. Reinforcements also arrived from the 11th Guards Army and 31st Army.

Minsk was cleared of Germans by the evening of the 3rd and the people danced in the streets of rubble, tears in their eyes as they welcomed the Red Army with flowers. The destruction in Minsk was terrible, as Zhukov recalled: 'The capital of Byelorussia was barely recognisable. I had commanded a regiment there for seven years and knew well every street, and all the main buildings, bridges, parks stadiums and theatres. Now everything was in ruins...'

The liberation of Minsk, the first real objective of Operation Bagration, had been achieved. There were still numerous German units to the east and, just as the city was being cleared, they were attempting to pull back across the Berezina.

Trapped in the Minsk pockets were soldiers from the 4th and 9th armies. According to Zhukov, 100,000 men were encircled east of Minsk. The two main groups to the east and the other to the southeast had little choice but to breakout. The Luftwaffe flew a final airdrop on the 5th before the Smilovichi airfield was lost.

Notably, General Vincenz Müller's 12th and General Paul Völckers' 27th Corps were amongst those encircled and the two generals found themselves together. To the east of Minsk and south of Smolovichi, a German pocket had formed near Pekalin. Three relatively intact divisions defended this, namely the

31st, 57th and 267th, along with units from three others. Although the 25th Panzergrenadiers mustered 32 assault and 20 self-propelled guns, they were down to just five-ten rounds of ammunition per gun. Some of 27th Corps was also present, as were all six divisional commanders along with Müller and Völckers.

On 5 July, they held a meeting against a backdrop of Soviet artillery fire and air attacks. Either in person or over the radio all the commanders were consulted. Looking at the situation reports and their maps, it was now apparent that the Soviets had penetrated over 62 miles (100km) to the west. Müller and Völckers knew that pushing their exhausted men, who were short of fuel and ammunition without air cover, over such a distance was an impossible task. However, there was no alternative.

### Cut to pieces

Müller had no stomach for anything but surrender, while Völckers was all for standing where they were and making a fight of it. The fear was if they attempted to escape they would lose all cohesion and be cut to pieces. General Adolf Trowitz commander of the 57th Division and a veteran of the bloody Korsun pocket and General Günther Klammt commander of the 260th Division were prepared to try for a breakout. Traut of the 78th, though a hardened soldier, was worried about the wounded, numbering up to 5,000, who would have to be left behind.

In the event and after much heated debate, it was decided that the two corps would each make separate attempts to break free, with 12th Corps heading northwest and 27th Corps pushing westward. It seemed better than awaiting the inevitable. Those units of 39th Panzer Corps that were available were divided between the two breakout groups. General Otto Drescher's 267th



The Germans set about demolishing Minsk once Hitler ordered the evacuation.



Knocked out Soviet T-76 tanks beneath a wooden blockhouse – despite such losses Soviet armour was simply overwhelming.



Retreating German troops torch a Russian farmhouse, such scorched earth tactics ensured German POWs were shown little leniency.



Infantry would continue acting as rearguard for 12th Corps, while the 25th Panzergrenadiers would spearhead the breakout efforts.

They opened the operation at 2359 hours, attacking west toward Dzerhinsk, southwest of Minsk. Their wounded were left behind with a doctor and a letter appealing for clemency. Having used up all the ammunition for their armoured fighting vehicles, the panzergrenadiers resorted to bayonet charges to break the Soviet cordon. General Paul Schürmann, leading about 1,000 men, one of three groups, stormed a Soviet artillery battery and escaped with just 100 troops. He eventually reached German lines between Molodechno and Vilnius with only 30 men from his division.

Panzergrenadiers of the Feldherrnhalle joined forces with Trowitz's 57th Infantry from 12th Corps, but like the other breakout efforts they were eventually dispersed in the face of heavy Soviet resistance. Initially, the 57th, some 12,000 men, bravely stuck together, joining the Feldherrnhalle at daybreak on the 6th. At nightfall, they set about the Soviet troops holding the Cherven-Minsk road. In the fighting that followed the panzergrenadiers were scattered, killed or captured. The infantry then split up, with the divisional commander and two vehicles carrying the wounded being the last to get over the road. Over the next two days, the Red Army hunted down Trowitz and most of his men.

Traut's 78th Assault Division, which had borne the brunt of Bagration when it commenced, managed to escape only to have the Soviets catch up with them with predictable and deadly results. General Müller's attempts to escape with the 18th Panzergrenadiers were likewise thwarted. Once in Soviet hands, he issued an order for all trapped troops to lay down their arms. The Soviets broadcast this over a mobile speaker system and dropped the order printed on leaflets. Most chose to ignore his instructions.

Part of the 14th Infantry Division, under their commander Lieutenant-General Flörke, succeeding in reaching remnants of Martinek's 12th and 31st Infantry Divisions; his Kampfgruppe Flörke, discovering Minsk abandoned and ablaze, was eventually able to escape the pocket and reach the 12th Panzer Division's positions.

General Otto Drescher's 267th Infantry made a break for it in three columns, heading for the Orsha-Minsk railway followed by the highway. The group on the left got over both but then ran into

**German defences to the west of Minsk such as this log bunker were deluged by Soviet artillery bombardment. This gunner would not have lasted long.**



Soviet tanks and was forced to surrender. The right hand group, fleeing through forest, came under partisan attack and many also surrendered. Those left pushed on heading northwest but encountered Soviet infantry and mortars, armed with just rifles and a handful of rounds per man the outcome was inevitable. Drescher, with the central column, had better luck crossing the railway and highway and headed for Molodechno, but he then split his group up. Few eluded the Red Army or partisans.

### **Cat and mouse**

The Soviets were now faced with a major mopping up operation. In the following week, whole German divisions tried to cut their way clear of the Red Army. Responsibility for rounding up the German stragglers after the fall of Minsk initially fell to Rokossovsky's troops, then Zakharov took over. His men scoured the ground between the Velma, Usha and Plissa rivers.

For several days, the survivors from these shattered divisions attempted to flee the pursuing Soviets through the forests and swamps in a desperate bid to escape. The Red Army hunted them down with great efficiency and the main units were annihilated or captured by 7-8 July. By the second week, as ammunition and food began to completely run out, the fighting died down and the German formations

broke down into ever smaller and smaller units trying to infiltrate westward. By the 9th, the largest remaining German forces had been rounded up or killed, but a deadly game of cat and mouse continued with the isolated and scattered stragglers. Special Soviet units were assigned the task to comb the surrounding countryside.

The Soviets recorded their successes during 5-11 July: in the first three days, they claimed to have killed 28,000 Germans and captured another 15,000; in total the number captured rose to 27,000. The loss of 55,000 men meant the total destruction of at least eight of 4th Army's divisions belonging to 12th, 27th and 39th Corps. The prisoners included 12 generals: three corps and nine divisional commanders. Müller along with Völckers who was also acting as commander of 4th Army were amongst the captured.

In the meantime, throughout 6 July, the Dirlewanger Brigade was entrenched southeast of Lida, where it launched a flank attack against the leading units of 26th Tank Corp to prevent the Kampfgruppe being overrun. On the 8th, the Soviets reacted with a counter-attack and the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corp captured Lida despite the arrival of Kampfgruppe Flörke and Kampfgruppe Weidling to strengthen the defence. Handing the town over to the 31st Army, the 3rd Guards Cavalry shifted south. Kampfgruppe Weidling withdrew on



the 9th, while Kampfgruppe Florke, fought the 2nd Guards Tank Corp for another day before retreating westward to Lithuania.

For the defence of Baranovichi, south west of Minsk, Model brought up reinforcements from Army Group North Ukraine; these included a panzer division and a Hungarian cavalry division. On 3 July, the very day that the Soviets entered Minsk, the Germans launched a local counterattack, recapturing Nesvizh and Stolbtsy southwest of Minsk – both points reached by Pliev's cavalry. Some 25 miles (40km) west of Slutsk, the Germans also prepared a rearguard on a position Semezhevo-Timkovichi to protect the Bobruisk-Baranovichi highway.

Although still occupied with those forces trapped east of Minsk, Rokossovsky began his operations against Baranovichi on 4 July. In just three days, a column pushed down the Minsk-Baranovichi railway and cleared the

this enabled Polotsk to be held for a few days longer, it opened up a dangerous gap between the Dvina and Vilnius.

By 28 June, with Bagramyan across the Ulla, the Red Army had been able to penetrate Polotsk's outer defences and the next day he cut the railway to Molodechno. Then advanced units reached Disna on the Divna just 30 miles (48km) west of Polotsk on 1 July. Infantry and tanks of General Chistyakov's 6th Guards Army launched the decisive attack from the south. Here, of course, lay the Germans main strength.

On 2 July, heavy fighting broke out on the small river Turovlya just ten miles (16km) from the town. The Germans were driven back and the following day the Soviets entered the suburbs near the Dvina bridge. Panzers fled over the bridge with Soviet tanks in hot pursuit, but only three got over before the defenders blew the bridge into the river. Undeterred Soviet infantry improvised and were

Grodno, Bialystok and Brest-Litvosk. Model desperately tried to hold a line from Vilnius to Baranovichi, but it was an impossible task once Baranovichi had fallen. Hitler exhibited his usual obsession with strongpoints and declared Vilnius a Fester Platz, demanding it be held to the last. Rotmsitrov's 5th Guards Tank Army quickly surrounded 3rd Panzer Army and permission to try and escape was not granted until 11 July. The following night, 6th Panzer cut a corridor, but few of the 15,000 troops trapped in the Vilnius area managed to get away.

It took Chernyakovsky's 3rd Byelorussian Front from 5-13 July, to overcome German opposition at Vilnius. Major General Stahel, the fortress commandant could muster just two grenadier, one SS police and an airborne regiment supported by an artillery regiment and a single anti-tank and air defence battalion. By 9 July, his men had suffered 1,000 killed and wounded. One German division in the area fought to the last losing 8,000 killed and 5,000 captured. A breakout was authorised and, on the night of 13/14 July, only 2,000 men made it to German lines.

The loss of Vilnius was followed by Pinsk and Grodno and German hopes of holding the Nieman River were dashed. West of Minsk, Chernyakovsky broke into Grodno on the Niemen on the 16th and a bridgehead was established to the north at Olita (Alytus) shattering any dreams Hitler may have harboured of Army Group Centre stabilising the situation on a 'Niemen Line.' As 4th Army was dying, the Red Army covered up to 15 miles (25kms) a day, sweeping to the East Prussian border and further into southern Poland. Operation Bagration had been completed.

### Ripped open

In the meantime, Rokossovsky's forces manoeuvred themselves into position ready for Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front's assault on Army Group North Ukraine and their supporting Lublin-Brest offensive. It was vital to secure Kovel, which formed the shoulder of the two Fronts and it was stormed on the 5th and the Germans withdrew behind the protection of the Pripyat Marshes and the headwaters of the river.

Also, way to the north, Zakahrov's 2nd Byelorussian Front took Volkovysk west of Baranovichi on 14 July after heavy with the fighting remnants of one of 9th Army's last remaining divisions in the field, the 45th Infantry under Generalmajor Joachim Engel from 35th Corps.



**A Russian soldier emerges from a captured German position; the Red Army spent a week ruthlessly hunting down German stragglers.**

Germans from the region near the source of the Niemen; Stolbtsy and Nesvizh were also recaptured. On the road from Slutsk, the Germans were thrown back and took up positions just a few miles east and northeast of Baranovichi.

### Panzers flee

While the defence of Minsk was a largely disorganised and half-hearted affair, the battle for Polotsk was a completely different matter. To hold Polotsk, two panzer and two infantry divisions were concentrated to the south of the Dvina, while the town itself on the north side had a garrison of two divisions. Although

fighting in the streets by nightfall.

On the 4th, Bagramyan's forces also stormed Polotsk from the east, though the garrison still had an escape route to the north. The gap in the Germans defences between Drissa and Molodechno was 120 miles (192km) wide. Bagrmyan and Chernyakovsky moved into this and during 3 and 4 July occupied Sharkovschisna, Glubokoe and Dokshitsky way to the west. The approaches to Lithuania were also reached, driving a wedge between Army Group Centre and Army Group North.

With the liberation of Minsk, the Red Army set its sights on Kaunas,



Before Bagration commenced, there were some 75 German divisions on a front stretching from Vitebsk to the Carpathians, a distance of some 600 miles (960km). Now there were 50 with another ten on their way holding about 500 miles (800km) running from the Dvina to the Carpathians. Some Red Army units were 300 miles (480km) from their starting point and at the very limits of their supply routes.

Incredibly, the bulk of Army Group Centre had been destroyed in just 12 days and a breach 250 miles (400km) ripped open in the Eastern Front. Between 25 and 28 German divisions were destroyed and ten generals killed and 21 captured. The near-total annihilation of Army Group Centre in the space of just under two weeks cost Hitler 300,000 dead, 250,000 wounded, and about 120,000 captured; overall casualties of 670,000. In addition, he lost 2,000 panzers and 57,000 other vehicles. Stalin's losses were 60,000 killed, 110,000 wounded, and about 8,000 missing, 2,957 tanks, 2,447 artillery pieces, and 822 aircraft.

Only about 20,000 troops from Army Group Centre escaped the debacle

unscathed. In total, eight scattered divisions remained to hold a front of 200 miles (320kms) in the face of 116 infantry divisions, six cavalry divisions, 16 mechanised infantry brigades and 42 armoured brigades. Thanks to 20th Panzer appropriating some new tanks, it was able to block Soviet attacks, allowing the exposed left flank of the German 8th Army to withdraw beyond the Carpathian Mountains to fight another day.

Stalin wanted the Western Allies to be made fully aware that he had torn the beating heart out of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front with the liberation of Minsk. In the Soviet capital, General Burrows, the Head of the British Military Mission in Moscow, was summoned on 6 July to be conducted on a three-day tour of Chernyakovsky's 3rd Byelorussian Front.

Burrows found his host, Soviet Chief of Staff Marshal Alexander Vasilevsky who had co-ordinated the northern pincher, unusually open and talkative. He informed Burrows that Soviet troops had noted the deterioration in the combat value of the Germans forces and that their success was thanks to the massed artillery and the Red Air Force.

The Soviet general also observed that the Germans had 'a blockhouse mentality,' little did they know that they had Hitler to thank for that.

Stalin paraded 57,000 bedraggled German prisoners through the streets of Moscow on 17 July. Some might question the wisdom and security of marching so many men through the Soviet capital, but Stalin wanted to do this to gloat, as revenge, but on a more practical level to disprove German claims of a 'planned withdrawal from Byelorussia.'

American war correspondent Alexander Werth recalled that it was a memorable sight: 'Particularly striking was the attitude of the Russian crowds lining the streets. Youngsters booed and whistle, and even threw things at the Germans, only to be immediately restrained by the adults; men looked on grimly and in silence; but many women, especially elderly women, were full of commiseration (some even had tears in their eyes) as they looked at these bedraggled "fritzes". I remember one old woman murmuring, "just like our poor boys... tozhe pognali na voynu (also driven into war)".' •



Following the swift collapse of Army Group Centre in the summer of 1944, there was little time for such military ceremonies. The dead were left where they fell.





# When Napoleon crushed Austria

In the summer of 1809, Napoleon confronted the might of the Austrian army at Wagram outside Vienna. The outcome, says ANDREW UFFINDELL, was decided by one of his bloodiest battles.

**T**hree times since the start of the Revolutionary wars in 1792 had the Austrians taken the field against France. Three times had they been defeated. The most recent attempt, in 1805, had ended in one of the worst disasters in military history, when Napoleon captured over 50,000 of their troops at Ulm, occupied Vienna, and then utterly smashed a combined Austro-Russian army at Austerlitz.

It says much for the resilience of the Habsburgs that they went to war yet again less than four years later. By then, Napoleon had become embroiled in a costly and debilitating conflict in Spain, 700 miles away at the opposite end of his empire, leaving his army dangerously overstretched and heavily reliant on foreign contingents supplied by satellite states. For those in the Austrian court and government who were intent on revenge,

it was too good an opportunity to miss.

## **The dark side**

On 10 April, the Austrians abruptly invaded Bavaria, Napoleon's most important ally in southern Germany. When he arrived from Paris a week later, he found a situation that would have daunted most commanders, yet in just six days he dramatically reversed the tide, winning three major battles, capturing



the walled city of Ratisbon, and throwing the Austrians back in disorder. 'I saw the dark side of war at its very worst,' wrote Wilhelm von Baden, a staff officer in Napoleon's army, as he rode across one of these battlefields the following morning. 'The night had hidden much that daylight now revealed in a way that filled me with abhorrence. The ground for a distance of several leagues was covered with dead and wounded, and the air was filled with the groans of the latter, who could be bandaged only very slowly and inadequately because of the shortage of surgeons. What outraged me the most was the behaviour of the marauders – camp followers and a horde of riff-raff – who looted violently from the injured, whom they often seriously maltreated, or even cruelly murdered, if they found them unwilling to hand over their belongings.'

Thrusting 200 miles eastwards along the south bank of the Danube, Napoleon occupied Vienna itself on 13 May. Yet despite the spectacular outcome of this opening round, the war dragged on. For all his victories, Napoleon had failed to destroy the Austrian army, which, however battered, remained intact somewhere north of the Danube. In order to make another attempt to crush it, he had to cross the river. That in itself would be a formidable undertaking since the permanent bridges had been destroyed. The stage was set for the next phase of the campaign, which would prove altogether bloodier and even more challenging.

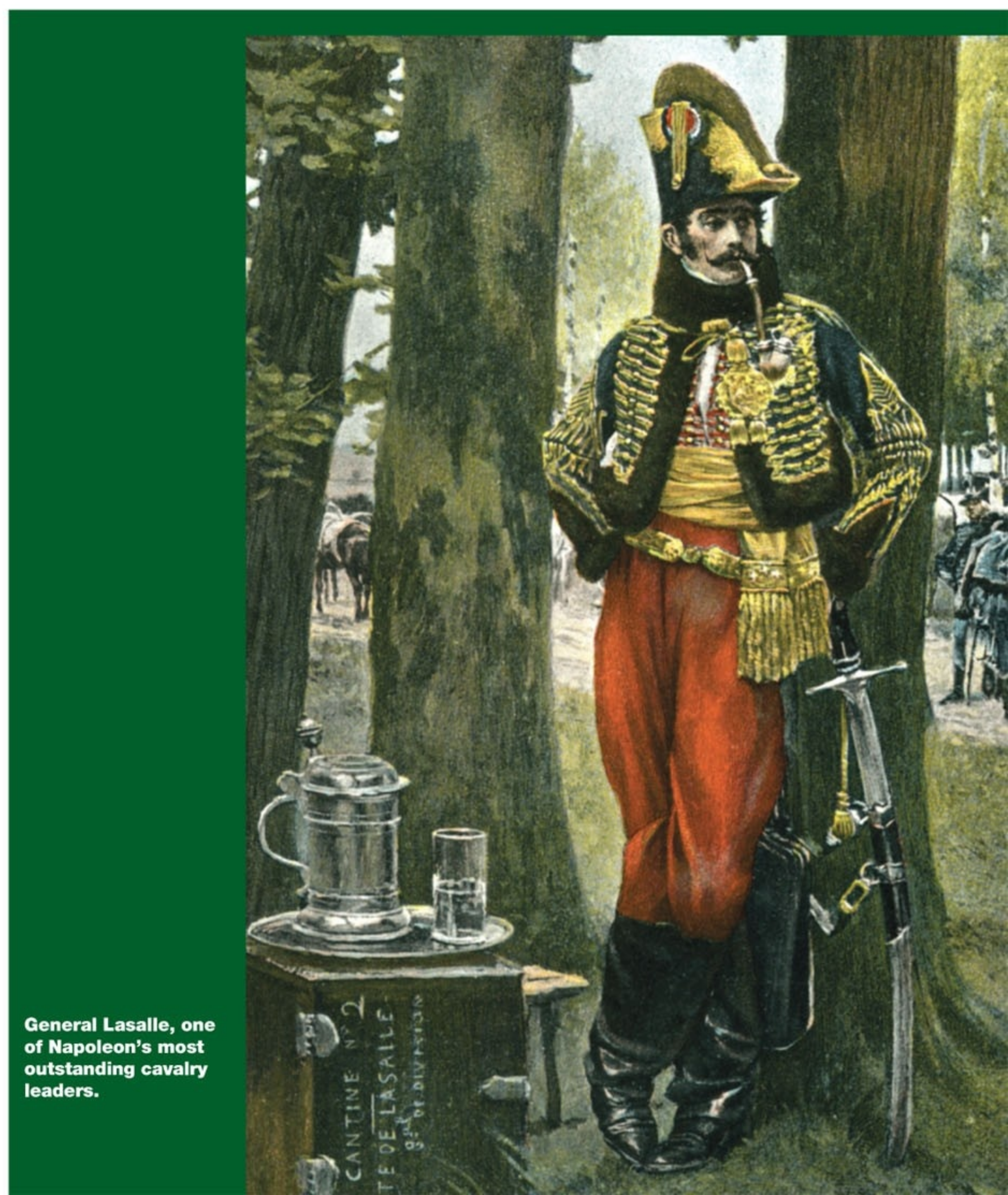
Napoleon ordered a temporary bridge thrown over the Danube six miles east of Vienna, using a series of islands as stepping stones. He did not expect to run into any major opposition while his army was still crossing, and was therefore taken by surprise on 21 May when the Austrian army under the Archduke Charles suddenly descended on his bridgehead at the twin villages of Aspern and Essling. Ferocious fighting was soon in progress. 'We were wrapped in thick clouds of black smoke rising from the burning village of Aspern,' recalled a French ADC, Colonel Louis-François Lejeune, 'through which the sun shone like a blood-red globe of fire, giving a crimson hue to the whole landscape.' An Austrian cavalryman, Lieutenant Karl von Grüber, found that it was the dust even more than the smoke that limited visibility while he was charging. 'So thick was the dust that you could barely see your neighbour,' he complained, 'and when it settled, you might find yourself very close to a French infantry square or cavalry unit.'

Napoleon had failed to realise until too late that the Austrian army was so close. Nor had he reckoned with the strength of the Danube, which was swollen with the spring meltwaters, a fact that the Austrians exploited by floating boats and other large objects down the river to smash his bridge. The repeated ruptures delayed Napoleon's deployment, and prevented him from establishing an adequate bridgehead. The small area he held was simply too congested to allow him to manoeuvre or to deploy enough troops to gain a breakthrough. Packed into a constricted strip of land little larger than Central Park in the middle of New York City, his forces were exposed to the fearsome firepower of the Austrian artillery, which was almost twice as numerous as his own. After two days of fighting, he was forced to evacuate his bridgehead.

Aspern-Essling was far from decisive, since Napoleon's army had not been routed, let alone destroyed. Yet there was no hiding the fact that he had suffered a more serious defeat than his setback against the Russians at Eylau two years

earlier. He had lost over 44,000 men, including one of his ablest subordinates, Marshal Jean Lannes, who had been mortally wounded. One of the most striking sights afterwards was that of fallen French cuirassiers strewn over the abandoned fields, lying just as they had been mown down by the hail of fire, with their splendid plates of armour sparkling in the sun. 'You would have thought that the whole of the ground was covered with strips of silver,' wrote a mesmerised Austrian lieutenant. One regiment, the 1st Cuirassiers, had lost a staggering nine officers and 79 other ranks killed or wounded, making Aspern-Essling by far its costliest battle of the entire Napoleonic wars.

Just a month earlier, a young Bavarian soldier-artist called Albrecht Adam had been awestruck by these formidable cavalrymen. 'The great masses of French cuirassiers were magnificent and truly imposing, as they rode into action at full trot, in long, closed-up ranks,' he recalled. 'The ground trembled as they moved, and the scabbards of their swords produced a strange, uncanny sound. The sight made



**General Lasalle, one of Napoleon's most outstanding cavalry leaders.**





**Napoleon supervises the bridging of the Danube before Wagram.**

a powerful impression, and you readily found yourself thinking that such masses must surely overthrow everything.' Yet these were the men who now lay in such numbers on the field of Aspern-Essling. Their fate was symbolic of Napoleon's own underlying problem: he had lost his image of invincibility. News of his repulse raised the hopes of opponents throughout Europe, leaving him in no doubt of the need to avenge his defeat and end the war as soon as possible with a crushing triumph. The necessary means were already on their way, for thousands of reinforcements were marching to join him at Vienna. In fact, the coming battle would be the largest that he had fought thus far in his career.

### **Fiery sky**

Having learnt from his mistakes, Napoleon made meticulous preparations for his next attempt. He decided to cross the Danube at the same point, using the large island of Lobau in the middle of the river as a launch-pad for his assault, although this time he would cross the final arm of the river from the eastern, rather than northern, side of the island. Parallel bridges would make the passage as easy as moving through the streets of a town, and they would be more robust and protected with stockades planted upriver. So extensive were the preparations that the island of Lobau looked like the

arsenal of a major port immediately before an expeditionary force sailed on some overseas mission.

A French hussar, Captain Hippolyte d'Espinhal, wrote his father a letter full of anticipation. 'The bloody actions that have been fought up to now are a long way from having decided the issue,' he explained. 'Yet when you occupy the capital of the empire you are fighting, it is a great step towards gaining a happy result, and it came within a hair's breadth of being gained on the day of the bloody battle of Essling, where, as you will see, my regiment was unable to take any part because of events that have forced the combatants to suspend the fight for a while. There is no doubt it will soon be renewed – and if we are to judge from the preparations that are being made, it's going to be terrible and decisive.'

On the evening of 4 July, Napoleon's batteries opened a furious bombardment, under the cover of which the leading French infantry began to cross. The assault coincided with a violent thunderstorm, whose claps of thunder and searing flashes of lightning intensified the stunning impact of the scene. 'The sky was ablaze,' recalled the assistant chief of staff, General Mathieu Dumas. 'It was a magnificent spectacle, for the thunder seemed to be fighting against the booming batteries, whilst in the intervals between the flashes that lit up this

impressive scene, the bombs and shells appeared to mingle with the bolts that criss-crossed the skies.' Another French officer, Colonel Lejeune, recalled how a sudden burst of lightning momentarily caught the distinct, unmistakable profile of a man wearing an overcoat and cocked hat. He realised to his astonishment that he was standing beside Napoleon himself.

Next morning, the drama of that night gave way to a beautifully serene day. 'The sun rose, adorned in all its finery,' recorded an ADC, Major Jean-Jacques Pelet, 'and revealed with its rays the banks of the Danube, which were covered with troops, boats, and guns. Long columns could be seen moving along the right bank, winding their way across the island of Lobau, crossing the final arm, and going to take up their battle positions. The Emperor on his horse was everywhere.' Equally amazed was Colonel Pierre Pelleport of the 18th Line Infantry. 'The Danube no longer existed for the French army,' he wrote. 'The sight of this passage was admirable.'

During the previous days, Archduke Charles had struggled with a dilemma that has confronted commanders throughout military history. He knew that a forward defence close to the Danube would leave him open to being outflanked by a crossing at an unexpected point, and yet keeping his





Napoleon watches the progress of his attacks on the second day of Wagram.

army further to the rear ready for a counter-attack might give Napoleon enough time to establish a secure bridgehead. He dithered, but eventually deployed the bulk of his forces seven miles back from the Danube.

As a result, once Napoleon's corps reached the north bank, they were able to fan out across the vast, almost featureless plain of the Marchfeld, and steadily approached the Austrian positions in a concave array more than 11 miles long. By evening, Napoleon had closed up. It was too late to gain a decision before nightfall, yet he launched an attack in the hope of dislodging the Austrian eastern wing before it had time to establish itself firmly in its strong, commanding position on some low hills behind the Russbach brook. The need for haste caused the assault to be poorly-co-ordinated, and it was bloodily repulsed after Charles personally intervened and rallied his men.

### Glittering weapons

After a chilly night, dawn on 6 July announced an oppressively hot day. In the bright sunshine, the two vast armies standing opposite each other made a magnificent sight. A young Bavarian observer, Albrecht Adam, found it distinctly unsettling. 'Already in the first light of day,' he explained, 'we saw the glitter of the Austrian weapons as far as

the eye could reach. At the same time, there prevailed the greatest quietness, and there was something eerie and yet solemn in the spectacle.'

At the centre of Charles' position lay the village of Deutsch-Wagram, which would give its name to the battle. The numerical advantage lay with Napoleon, yet it was too narrow for him to be sure of victory. He fielded around 154,000 troops and 554 guns, whereas Archduke Charles had 142,000 men and 414 guns. Initially, the front lines followed an east-west axis. Yet while Napoleon aimed to open the battle with a powerful onslaught in the east, Archduke Charles intended to launch his main thrust at the opposite end of the battlefield. Two Austrian corps, with a total strength of more than 35,000 men, were to advance from the northwest, and march parallel to the Danube in order to penetrate behind Napoleon's western flank and deep into his rear, thus threatening his line of retreat over the river. These very different French and Austrian battle plans, with their emphasis on opposite flanks, would result in the two armies beginning to rotate anti-clockwise as they grappled all along the line.

But there was a second element to Charles' strategy. He hoped to be joined later in the day by his younger brother, Archduke John, whom he had previously recalled with a detachment of 13,000

men from Pressburg, 30 miles to the east. This opened the possibility of a double envelopment, with Napoleon being outflanked from both west and east. The sheer boldness of Charles' conception commands admiration. He did, in fact, have a real chance of success, and was undoubtedly right in rejecting the idea of fighting a purely defensive battle. Simply by taking the offensive, he might knock Napoleon off balance, and disrupt his deployments.

Yet the Austrian plan did have two serious drawbacks. First, it depended on careful coordination, and, as it turned out, both of the outflanking thrusts would run into serious delays. In fact, John would fail to arrive at all until after the outcome had been decided. Secondly, the emphasis on either wing committed the Austrians to operating along the outside of an arc almost 15 miles long, which weakened their centre, whereas Napoleon enjoyed a more compact position, and had closed up his forces to hold a front of just six miles. He could immediately rush reinforcements wherever they were needed, for he had deployed his reserves right at the very heart of the battlefield, where they were no more than three miles from any sector.

Napoleon was up early, and preparing to renew the battle, when he found himself pre-empted. Soon after dawn, his far right wing – Marshal Davout's





**Austrian grenadiers defending the village of Aderklaa during the Battle of Wagram.**



**French cuirassiers charge Austrian infantry at Aspern-Essling.**

III Corps – came under attack. Davout checked this onslaught within two hours and then, on Napoleon's orders, prepared to launch an offensive of his own, into the eastern flank of Charles' army in order to begin rolling back the Austrian battlefront. Once Davout's advance was fully under way, Napoleon intended to unleash a major frontal offensive further west. But once again, the Austrians refused to wait for him: they had already sparked off a ferocious fight for the village of Aderklaa near the western end of his front line. Napoleon simply could not afford to lose this vital stronghold, which served to anchor his western wing

in the midst of the exposed plain.

Napoleon's plans were further disrupted when he learned of the two Austrian corps ponderously rolling forward against his left rear. It was fortunate for him that the Austrian army upheld its reputation for sluggishness and a lack of initiative. The two corps had already been delayed by three hours, and failed to act vigorously. Even so, they posed a dire threat in the absence of much more than a single infantry division in their path. By 11.00am, therefore, Napoleon faced one of the worst crises of his career. Aderklaa had been lost once more, while the Austrian

outflanking thrust had penetrated beyond Aspern, and was threatening the vital bridges across the Danube. Panic spread behind the lines, and sent a tide of non-combatants fleeing for safety with shouts that the battle was lost. The prospect loomed of a disaster that would eclipse Aspern-Essling altogether.

That outcome was narrowly averted, partly because Marshal Davout now opened his full-blooded onslaught against the Austrian eastern flank, thus distracting Archduke Charles and reducing the pressure further west. A French ADC involved in this attack, Captain Alexandre Coudreux, was right in the thick of the fighting. 'The enemy defended himself valiantly, and inflicted dreadful damage on us,' he admitted. 'The battlefield was covered with both our dead and his. Our ranks were under a hail of canister, and one battalion was left with just a single officer. As my general charged at the head of his brigade, he was hit by a cannonball, which tore away his epaulette and badly damaged his right shoulder, while at the same moment, his horse was wounded by two musketshots. I was struck on the leg above the ankle by a shell burst, and given a bad bruise. A second shot broke the sabre that I was holding, and took out one of my horse's eyes. Just a moment earlier, a cannonball had removed the head of a battalion commander as I gave him an order, and left me covered in his blood and part of his brain.'

Despite heavy resistance, Davout made good progress. As the Austrian eastern wing began to crumble, Napoleon acted decisively to shore up his own endangered flank at the opposite end of the battlefield. To do so, he pulled Marshal André Massena's corps out of the Aderklaa sector, where it was engaged, and sent it four miles southwards to cover the vital Danube bridges. It was a risky move, involving a march across the front of the Austrian outflanking thrust, but the experienced Massena was equal to the challenge. Within a couple of hours, he had redeployed his corps in the critical sector next to the Danube, thus putting an abrupt end to the most dangerous Austrian threat.

### **Terrible cannonade**

'The battle was general,' wrote Corporal Friedrich Mändler, one of Napoleon's Bavarian soldiers. 'The cannonade along the whole, extensive battle line was too heavy for an individual cannonshot to be distinguished any longer. It was just one continuous thunder, and made the



ground shake.’ The two sides fielded a combined total of almost 1,000 guns, well over double the number present on the morning of Waterloo six years later. Colonel Lejeune saw cannonballs ricocheting much like hailstones bouncing off the ground during a violent storm. ‘In this part of the battlefield we lost a good deal of ground with many men,’ he added, ‘and I felt very anxious as to the result of the day.’

Elsewhere, a Saxon infantryman was horrified as comrades fell to the ground, torn and shattered by the Austrian fire. He saw his brigade commander trapped under his dead horse. He and some other men dragged the general out, but found him so stunned and bruised that he was unable to speak, let alone walk, so they sat him on their muskets, and carried him like that, until eventually they found another horse.

The musketry was no less intense. On the Austrian side, Lieutenant Maximilien von Thielen described how his regiment of cuirassiers vainly charged some French infantry. In an instant, he received seven balls, and was fortunate that they all struck his horse and its equipment, leaving himself untouched, apart from that bruise on his leg where one of the balls had ricocheted off his scabbard. His horse carried him out of danger, and he ordered a trumpeter to sound the rally. The man duly put the trumpet to his mouth, but for some reason produced no sound. Instead, he gave Thielen an odd look, as if he wanted to ask permission simply to ride to the rear. But that was out of the question, for the call had to be blown, and so Thielen started to threaten him with his sword. Right at that instant, a cannonball tore the man’s head from his body, and completely covered Thielen with gore. He wondered afterwards about the man’s strange behaviour, and whether it was a premonition of approaching death that had made him unable to use his trumpet.

Napoleon himself was dangerously exposed. At one point that day, he entrusted a message to Captain Désiré Ch\_apowski, who was serving as an orderly officer. Ch\_apowski raised his hat, as was the custom when receiving an order from the Emperor, only for it to be snatched from his hand and thrown some distance as a cannonball whizzed past. ‘It’s lucky you’re not taller,’ Napoleon told him with a smile. Someone retrieved the hat, which was covered in dust but bore no visible sign of damage. Ch\_apowski particularly remembered the incident, since it showed

Napoleon’s state of mind in being able to joke during such tense and perilous moments.

Napoleon’s calmness was all the more impressive given the seriousness of the situation that confronted him. Having pulled Massena out of the line in order to check the Austrian outflanking move, he plugged the ensuing gap by extending the adjacent forces and committing some of his reserve cavalry. Most importantly of all, he sent forward the Imperial Guard artillery to form the basis of an awesome, massed battery of over 100 guns.

### Massive onslaught

One of the artillery officers of the Guard was Major Jean-François Boulart, who vividly described what happened next. ‘Suddenly, a great agitation began around us,’ he recalled. ‘Drums and trumpets sounded, and everyone was at his post in less than a minute. The entire Guard, formed in a single mass, set off, and

moved to the left. The artillery went on ahead at a gallop.’ Advancing under fire, the various batteries deployed in succession as they reached their allocated position, in order to form a line of guns 2,000 yards long.

This formidable wall of fire pounded the Austrians and checked their progress, but only at a cost. ‘The enemy artillery, which was at least as numerous as ours, did us much harm,’ explained Boulart, ‘and was felling our men and horses at every moment. To the right and left rear of my batteries, I had a regiment of infantry and one of cuirassiers, and they were wrecked. I myself was bruised by the shock of a 12-pounder cannonball that, as it ricocheted at the end of its flight, ended up between a pistol holster and the coat that covered it. My officers thought that I had lost my leg, yet I was merely left with a limp for a couple of days.’

Napoleon used his massed battery



French, German and Austrian soldiers of the Napoleonic wars. Austrian soldiers figures 7,8,9 & 10.





Austrian grenadiers attack the village of Essling.

not just to contain the Austrians, but to pulverise them in preparation for a final, colossal attack, and this was what made its deployment so significant. The sheer number of guns, and the fact that they were deployed so suddenly and aggressively, revealed that Napoleon had managed to develop his artillery into a battle-winning arm. This alone would have been enough to ensure that Wagram was one of the most significant engagements in history. 'I have never seen a battle that was so long or in which the artillery played such a fine role,' stated the French artillery commander, General Jean Baston de Lariboisière. 'It was truly the artillery that decided the victory; the ammunition it expended and the losses it suffered were prodigious. The Guard artillery alone fired more than 15,000 shots. I have never heard such a cannonade.'

Having thus softened up the Austrian centre, Napoleon was ready to launch his final onslaught early in the afternoon. As many as 8,000 infantrymen under General Jacques Macdonald spearheaded the attack, advancing in a hollow, rectangular formation. They broke into Charles' position, but encountered heavy resistance, and ground to a halt after an hour of slowly pressing forward into a converging hail of fire. The breakthrough proved elusive, partly because of the paralysis that afflicted the Guard cavalry owing to

Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bessières having been stunned and put out of action when his horse was shot beneath him.

Despite Napoleon's failure to punch right through the Austrian centre, he had as good as won the battle. Charles himself was in no doubt about the outcome. His hopes of cutting Napoleon off from the Danube had been decisively foiled, his eastern wing was crumbling in the face of Davout's continuing advance, and he now knew that Archduke John was still too distant to intervene in time. Recognising that he could no longer hope for victory, Charles decided to break off the battle rather than risk the complete destruction of his army. He skilfully covered the withdrawal of his two wings by putting up a stout resistance in the centre, and then pulled back altogether. He managed not only to disengage in good order, but also took with him as many as 7,000 prisoners and 21 captured guns. Napoleon's army was too battered and exhausted to mount a pursuit until the following afternoon.

### Horrific losses

Wagram was one of the most remarkable battles ever fought. The strength of the armies, the immensity of the preparations, and the importance of the political and military consequences made it a milestone in history. Tactically indecisive, in that it failed to destroy the

### Lucky to survive

An Austrian officer, Karl Varnhagen von Ense, vividly described his sensations on being shot on the first day of Wagram. 'When the ball struck my leg, I felt a blow that went through me, and on looking down, I saw two streams of blood running down my thigh. The ball had gone clean through it.' But he had no time to think, for his regiment was in full retreat, and he was in danger of being left behind. Two Austrian soldiers grabbed him by the arms, and half carried him to the rear, despite the cannonballs that plunged to the ground around them.

Eventually, Varnhagen was placed in an empty ammunition wagon heading for the rear. 'The jolting of the cart gave me excruciating pain,' he wrote, 'and when the flow of blood, which had continued until now, ceased, my whole leg grew stiff and cold. Like the others, I suffered from extreme thirst, and the chill of the night air was hard to bear.' His injuries were hurriedly examined by a surgeon later that night, but were not properly dressed until the following evening. He might easily have died after becoming gripped with fever, yet gradually recovered and subsequently won fame as a writer.



Austrian army, it nevertheless decided the war by shattering the Habsburgs' willingness to fight on. An armistice was signed on 12 July, and a peace treaty followed three months later. The campaign therefore reshaped Europe by creating a new alliance between France and Austria that would form the central element in Napoleon's efforts to consolidate his sprawling Empire. But in retrospect, Wagram became even more significant. It marked the last time he managed to impose terms on an enemy at the end of a campaign. Thereafter, he would gain no more than armistices and temporary successes, and would never again secure a victorious peace.

In human terms, Wagram was the ghastliest battle Napoleon had yet fought. During the two-day action, an estimated 70,000-75,000 troops on both sides combined were killed, wounded, or captured, or about one man in every four. The scale of the losses reflected the size of the armies, the quantity of their artillery, and the fact that they fought for the most part over a flat and exposed plain. The fall of some of Napoleon's most outstanding subordinates made the cost of victory even dearer. Dozens of his generals had been killed or wounded, including his flamboyant and irreplaceable light cavalryman, Charles Lasalle, who had shot been dead in one of the final charges. The devastating impact of the battle becomes even clearer if we consider an individual unit. The 12th Line Infantry, one of Marshal Davout's regiments, lost no fewer than 58 officers during the campaign as a whole, with almost half of them being accounted for by Wagram. Yet Napoleon's rewards were equally prodigious in scale. The regiment's acting commander was admitted to the Imperial Guard, while many of his men received either medals or promotion.

Even more spectacular were the honours with which Napoleon showered the most senior ranks. He gave his chief-of-staff, Marshal Louis-Alexandre Berthier, the title of Prince of Wagram, clearly in recognition of the meticulous organisation of the crossing of the Danube, without which the battle could not even have been fought. At the same time, he awarded a marshal's baton to no fewer than three of the corps commanders at Wagram: Macdonald, Oudinot, and Marmont. Not everyone approved of their elevation.

One of Oudinot's subordinates, Colonel Pierre Berthezène, condemned him as a mediocre general unfit for high

rank and always too quick to dash into the thick of the action with the mindless cheer of 'Forwards, charge!' Even so, Oudinot's bravery was indisputable. On the second day of the battle, he lost a succession of horses in seizing the village of Deutsch-Wagram. 'He was bare-headed,' noted one of his staff, 'his clothes were ripped and covered in blood from two wounds. He had just had a ball pass through his right leg. Sticking his valorous sword into the ground that he had conquered, he leaned on its pommel, whilst Doctor Capiomont stemmed the blood with wads of shredded linen, and bound up his leg.' Napoleon sent instructions to hand over his command and withdraw to Vienna to recover from his injuries, but Oudinot refused. 'Tell

walls on either side further back, so as to guard against the threat of a cavalry charge or a counter-attack from a flank while it tried to fight its way through the Austrian position. During the battle as a whole, Napoleon kept tight control of his army, and that was a significant achievement, given its sheer size. He had reacted quickly and decisively when unexpectedly faced with a series of dangerous Austrian onslaughts, and the solution he devised and implemented even as the battle was in progress was nothing short of masterly.

The campaign overall, including the spectacular opening round, disproves the often repeated claim that Napoleon's powers were in decline. What had changed were the capabilities



**Napoleon with the mortally wounded Marshal Lannes.**

His Majesty,' he retorted, 'that I will not budge from Wagram until after the enemy has been completely routed.'

Oudinot's attitude was admirable, yet his blunt and uncompromising remark is apt to reinforce a widespread misunderstanding about the clash. All too often, Wagram has been seen simply as a brutal, bludgeoning battle, waged with massed formations and head-on attacks, and devoid of any tactical skill or finesse on the part of the commanders. This is hardly justified. Even the culminating, frontal onslaught by Macdonald, so often condemned as unimaginative to the point of stupidity in the way it was carried out, was actually launched in a sensible formation under the circumstances. Far from being a solid mass of men, it was hollow, with a line of battalions in front, and a series of battalion columns forming the

of the armies that now opposed him. Reformed, expanded, and reasonably well commanded, they had become tougher and more resilient. The Grand Army's years of dominating the battlefield with the ease conferred by a significant edge in quality, experience, and organisation were over, and that made Napoleon's skills as a commander all the more important. This is the real conclusion to be drawn from Wagram, and the reason it is so worthwhile to study. Colonel Lejeune, who was a talented artist as well as a soldier, had no regrets at having been present. 'The campaign of 1809 was indeed the grandest spectacle offered to the world during the all too short duration of the Empire,' he wrote, 'and I count myself fortunate not only to have been one of the actors in the fine drama, but also to have survived to record with brush and pen what I witnessed.' •





# STEEL TYPHOON AT OKINAWA

The final land battle of the Pacific War was the conflict's longest—and the bloodiest for the Americans since Gettysburg. BLAINE TAYLOR talks to one of the veterans.

**I**n a top-level command conference on 12 December 1944, Japanese military leaders in Tokyo pondered the next move of their American opponent on the vast ocean highway leading to the Home Islands—Formosa or Okinawa? Japanese martial doctrine asserted a decisive battle to defeat their enemy, both at land and on sea, and Okinawa seemed their best bet to inflict both as 1945 dawned.

The Japanese landed on the island in 1609, annexing it to Japan proper in 1879. Okinawa is a rugged part of the Ryukyu Archipelago chain of islands, a scant 350 nautical miles from the

sacred Home Islands themselves, and in 1945 was included in the 47 Japanese administrative prefectures. When American Navy Commodore Matthew C Perry landed there with his 'black ships' in 1853 on his way to Japan, he called Okinawa, the 'very door of the Empire'. He recommended that the US fleet establish a base there, such as still existed when I visited it in 1966 on my way to Vietnam.

In the spring of 1945, a vast Allied naval armada commanded by US Navy Vice Admiral Raymond A Spruance approached the fortified sea bastion to begin the battle later called 'The Steel

Typhoon'. On Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, Operation Iceberg began landing the newly-created US 10th Army under the overall ground command of US Army Lt-General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr, a veteran Japanese-fighter since 1942. They hit the Hagushi beaches, just as their enemy expected and planned for.

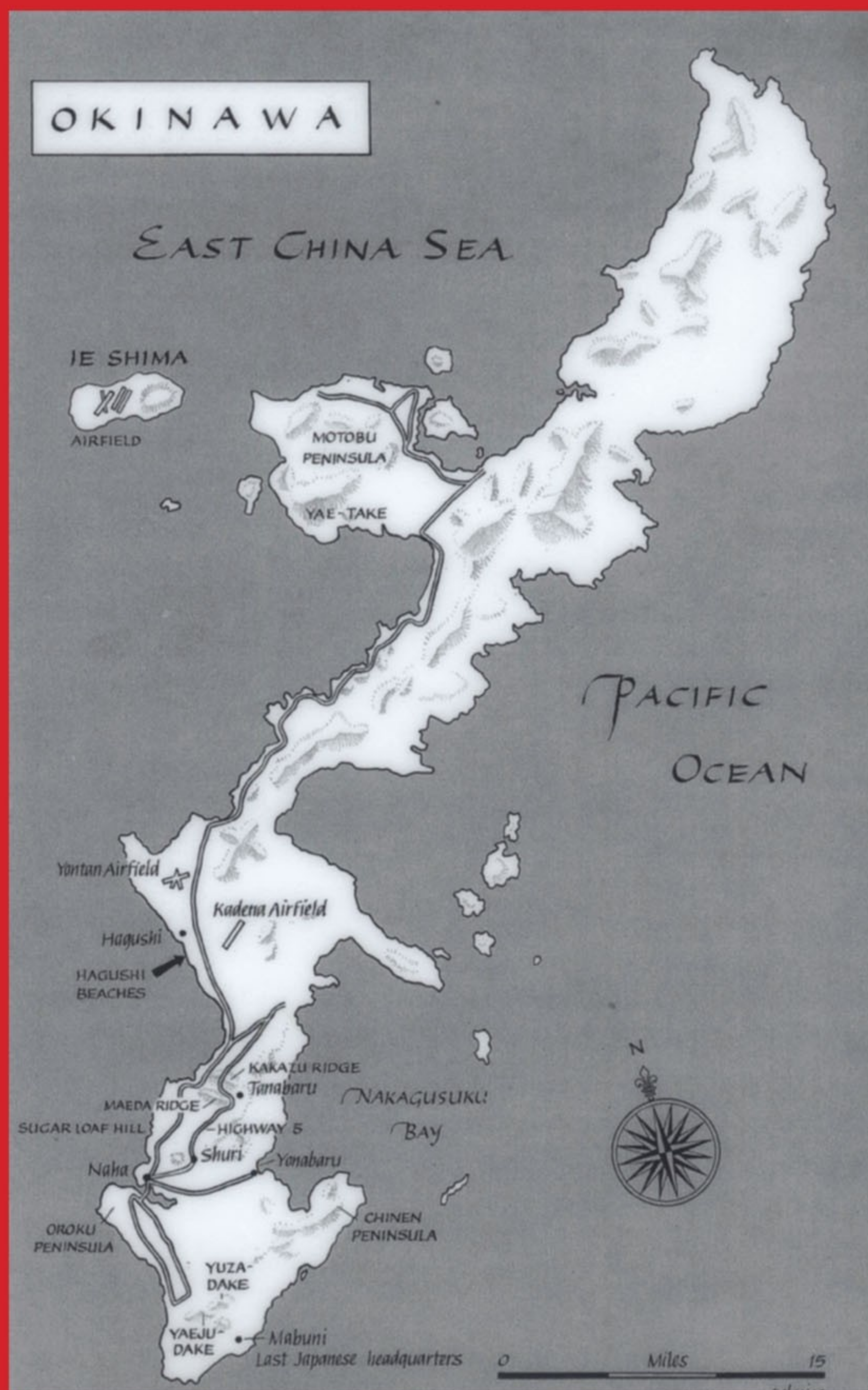
## **'Where is the enemy?'**

The Allies coveted Okinawa as the final staging point for the projected, two-fold invasion of homeland Japan herself, Operations Olympic and Coronet, the twin parts of the overall Downfall.





**US Marines wearing camouflaged helmet covers engage in a hot firefight on Okinawa, 1945. (USMC)**



Japanese Emperor Hirohito's generals and admirals saw the coming island battle as their last chance to destroy the invading enemy hosts. Thus, for both sides, Okinawa was to become the crucial battle of the entire war. Indeed, due to the later American dropping of the two atomic bombs that ended the war in sudden flashes, the fight for the island fortress was to be the very last such ground combat between them.

Prior to the landings, the American fleet undertook the heaviest naval bombardment of the war, ironically—as the startled ground troops discovered—against beaches virtually undefended,

in sharp contrast to all previous amphibious assaults. Astonishingly, more than 60,000 US troops were ashore by the end of the first day, with two key objectives, Yontan and Kadena airfields, both taken at the loss of but 28 lives and 27 wounded.

This start of the campaign was deceptive, however, and before it was over a torturous 82 days later, it was the bloodiest US battle since Gettysburg in 1863. It witnessed 110,000 Japanese killed and a stunning 10,775 captured; while the US 10th Army lost 7,613 dead and missing, plus 31,800 wounded—the highest rate of combat fatigue of any

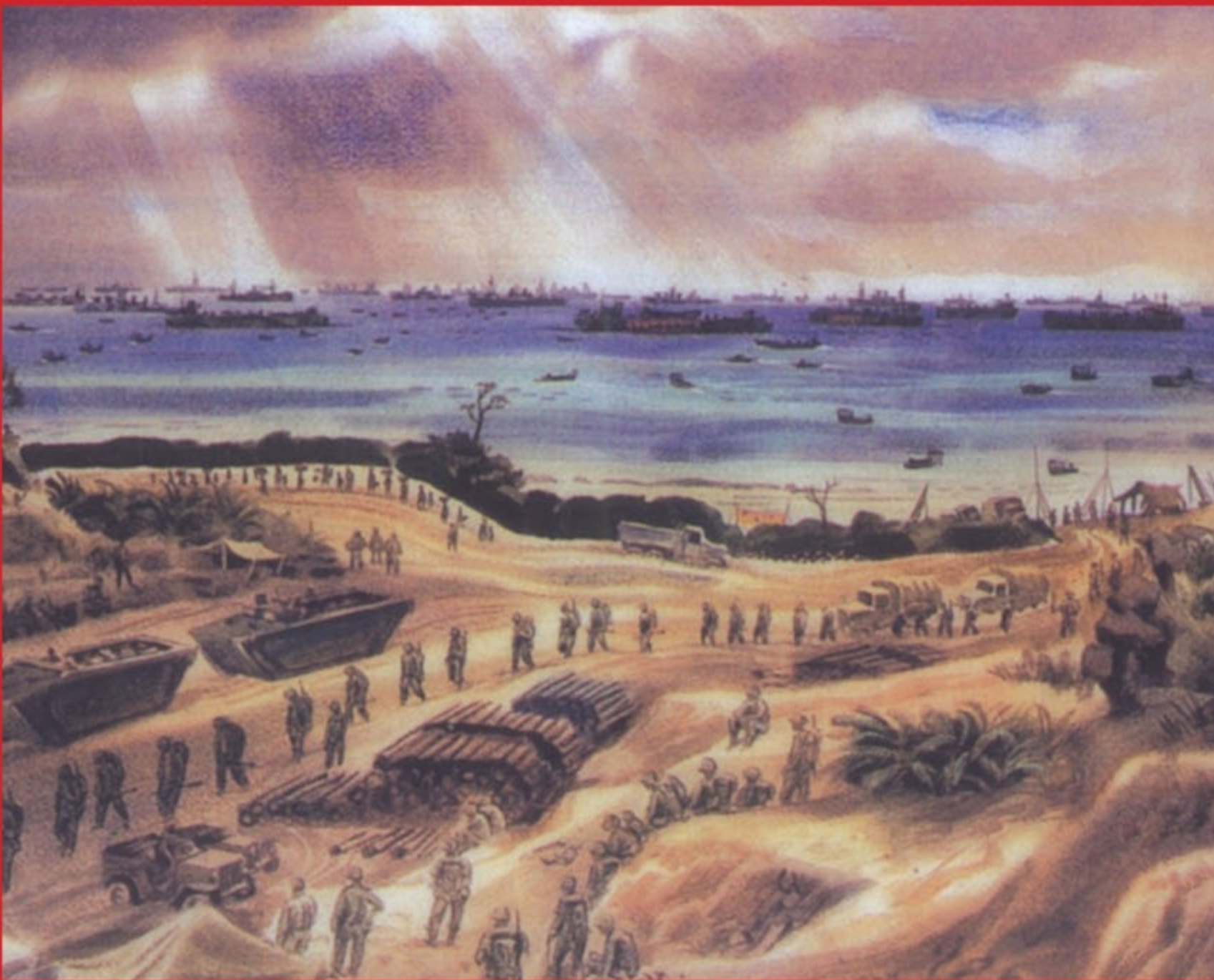
campaign in the war.

The new Japanese strategy was both simple and deadly: allow enemy forces to land, draw them ever inland, and only then annihilate their soldiers en masse. Thus, fierce, daily battles after the first week raged at the ancient royal Shuri Castle, Japanese headquarters, and at the capital city of Naha that changed hands under fire 14 times. More ferocious fighting took place on Kakazu Ridge, the Rocky Crags, and atop Sugar Loaf Hill, where, wrote Okinawan Marine, the late William Manchester, life expectancy was 'about seven seconds'. Wounded and left for





Wartime painting 'Ack-Ack at Sunset' by American artist Mitchell Jamieson depicts US Navy gunners offshore reacting to kamikaze suicide attack aircraft overhead. Initial US intelligence assessed 65,000 Japanese on Okinawa when the invasion began, but there were actually at least 100,000 ashore. (US Navy Combat Art Collection)



Wartime painting by Navy artist Mitchell Jamieson entitled 'Green Beach 2, D-Day Plus One'. Here, American troops and mechanized, tracked vehicles move inland on Okinawa, with the invasion fleet lying at anchor offshore. (US Navy Combat Art Collection)

dead, Manchester survived to write his own memoirs of the fighting.

At their command, the Japanese had 77,000 Regular Army troops: 39,000 infantry combat troops, and 38,000 special troops, artillery, and other units. These included 20,000 Boeitai or drafted militia native Okinawans; 15,000 non-uniformed laborers; 15,000 students in Iron and Blood Volunteer Units, and 600 more students in a nursing unit.

The Japanese deployed their men on Okinawa firmly embedded in successive lines of vast complexes of above-ground pillboxes and bunkers, plus dug-in mountainous caves, and deep underground shelters. Indeed, there were even fortified foxholes among the ancient tombs, leading Buckner's successor that June 23rd, fiery US Army General Joseph W Stilwell to comment, 'The poor Okinawans have had even their ancestors blown to pieces!' Fanatical Japanese defenders, and many civilians also, who feared rape and murder from the American GIs, either fought to their deaths, or leaped over the edge of the island's sheer cliffs to their doom.

US guns fired more than 1,760,000 artillery rounds. General Buckner's land forces comprised two corps, 24th and 3rd Amphibious, with three US Marine divisions (the 1st and 2nd, and 6th); his Army divisions were the 7th, 27th, 77th, 81st, and 96th : 102,000 soldiers and 81,000 Marines to seize an unknown island 60 miles long and from two to 28 miles wide at various points. The Japanese defenses were mainly in the island's southern end, deployed in a trio of major lines running along rugged east-west ridgelines, from which they could fire down on their hapless foe below.

General Buckner landed his troops on the western side of the island's narrow waist, and advanced for the first five days almost without any enemy contact. Major contact with the Japanese was finally made on the 6th, as the Americans ran into the first enemy defense line along Kakazu Ridge. General Buckner's own 'blowtorch and corkscrew' frontal assault tactics finally prevailed over the dogged Japanese resistance. The former referred to flame-throwing US Army medium Sherman tanks that fried the enemy defenders alive in their emplacements, while the latter blasted them out of their pillboxes and caves with sticks of dynamite.

General Buckner rejected Marine pleas for a second, follow-up





**Marine of the 1st Marine Division draws a bead on a Japanese sniper with his clip-fed Tommy gun (left), as his buddy (right) seeks cover, on the way to taking Wana Ridge before the Okinawan town of Shuri. (SSgt Walter F Kleine, 1945, USMC, USNA)**

amphibious landing behind the enemy's inland lines, choosing instead to slug it out, Verdun-style, inch-by-inch, yard-by-yard. For this, American General Douglas MacArthur accused rival theater commander US Admiral Chester W Nimitz of 'Sacrificing thousands of American soldiers'—one of many controversies still raging over the epic fight. Meanwhile, offshore, an equally fierce battle raged at sea and in the air, just as the Japanese hoped and planned for.

### **Suicide mission**

The Imperial Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet launched 16 ships led by the world's greatest battleship, the mammoth Yamato ('National Spirit'), on a grim suicide mission with just enough fuel to steam but one way to attack the US invasion force. Intercepted by US aircraft carriers 210 miles north of Okinawa, however, the mighty Japanese battlewagon was sunk

on 6 April 1945 in just under two hours by bombs and torpedoes, a ship as yet un-raised. The others were lost as well.

Overhead, during 6 April-25 May, the Japanese Navy's Special Attack Corps launched seven mighty waves of more than 1,500 kamikaze suicide planes to crash into the 1,200 American warships. At least 1,100 of the suicide planes were lost in action. The US Navy suffered greater casualties in this one campaign than in any other battle of the war. In all, 28 ships were sunk: 12 destroyers and 16 amphibious vessels, while 368 more were damaged. There were 4,907 US Naval dead and 4,874 wounded.

The Divine Wind hearkened back to the 13th century, when a storm destroyed a Chinese invasion fleet bound for Japan. To reward the desperate, wishful thinking of the embattled Japanese, one of the worst typhoons in history struck the US fleet on 5 June 1945, and almost wrecked it.

IJN Rear Admiral Minoru Ota

commanded 10,000 sailors of the Okinawa Naval Base Force's Surface Escort Unit, and also local naval aviation, on Oroku Peninsula. His seven sea-raiding battalions, formed to man suicide boats to crash into US warships, were mostly converted to naval infantry units fighting in the land battle instead. The admiral committed suicide, or was killed by enemy action, in his command cave headquarters on 13 June 1945.

Ashore, two tough Japanese counterattacks were crushed by massive American ground fire on both 12 April and 3-5 May. Buckner's next advance was launched on the 11th, and smashed through the Shuri Castle line, broken on both enemy flanks, leading the Japanese to fall back to their third and last defensive line, on the island's southern tip. Buckner launched his third and final push on 18 June, the very day he was slain (see sidebar). The last 10 air assaults finally secured the island.

What did this look like to the average



## American Commanders

### Buckner

He was the only son of famed American Confederate General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Sr, who surrendered CSA Fort Donelson to Union General Ulysses S Grant in 1862 during the American Civil War. Born 18 July 1886, in Kentucky, the younger Buckner grew up while his father served as Governor during 1887-91. After having attended the famous Virginia Military Institute, the younger Buckner graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point in the Class of 1908 as an infantry officer. He then saw two tours of duty in the colonial Philippines, and trained aviators during the Great War.

Postwar, Buckner was a training officer at West Point, the General Service School at Fort Leavenworth, KS; and the Army War College at Washington, DC. Noted one parent 'Buckner forgets that cadets are born—not quarried.'

He first fought the Japanese as commander of the Alaska Defense Command during 1942-43 at the battles of Dutch Harbor, Kiska and Attu Islands. In July 1944, Buckner assumed command of the new American 10th Army in Hawaii, that comprised both Army and Marine units, to prepare for the invasion of the Chinese Island of Taiwan, later canceled, with Okinawa substituted instead.

On 18 June 1945, just a month shy of his 58th birthday, General Buckner ventured far forward against advice on Okinawa to observe the 8th Marine Regiment of the 1st Marine Division in combat action. Standing between two boulders above them, he turned to leave, when a Japanese 47mm artillery shell exploded overhead. Noted author Toland: 'A fragment shattered a mound of coral, and freakishly, one jagged piece of coral flew up and embedded itself in the general's chest. He died 10 minutes later.'

Succeeded by Marine General Roy Geiger, Buckner was the highest-ranking American killed in the Pacific War, and was posthumously promoted in 1954 to four-star general rank by a Special Act of Congress. He is buried at Frankford, KY.

### Shepherd

Buckner's subordinate commander was Marine Corps General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr, a veteran of both World

Wars, as well as the later Korean War. As a four-star general, he served as the Corps' 20th Commandant during 1952-55, under two US Presidents.

Born on 10 February 1896, Shepherd graduated from prestigious VMI in 1917 a year early so that he could join the Corps. Commissioned a second lieutenant that April, Shepherd fought in the Great War battles of Chateau-Thierry, Belleau Wood, St Mihiel, and the Meuse-Argonne, being wounded three times.

After occupation duty in defeated Germany, Shepherd was both a White House aide and aide-de-camp to Corps Commandant Major-General. John A Lejeune postwar. His other interwar postings included sea duty, Brazil, China, and graduation in 1937 from the US Naval War College. Just before World War II, Shepherd was also a training officer at Quantico, VA. His early

Second World War combat actions as a troop commander included Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester on New Britain, and the 1944 invasion and recapture of Japanese-held Guam, all in the Pacific.

He commanded the 6th Marine Division throughout the battle of Okinawa, landed at Inchon in Korea, and was in the 'Frozen Chosin' Marine evacuation as well. On 1 January 1952, President Truman named Shepherd as Commandant of the Corps, and in that capacity, he was the first Marine to become a member of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, thus gaining parity with the other Armed Services that still exists. He retired in 1956, then served until 1959 as Chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board. The general died at age 94 in 1990 at La Jolla, CA of bone cancer, and was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.



With the captured Okinawan capital of Naha in the background, US 6th Marine Division commander Major General Lemuel C Shepherd, Jr, pores over a map of the rugged terrain in June 1945. (USMC, PFC Sam Weiner, US National Archives)



fighting man? Let's take a look through the eyes of a then 21-year-old US Marine lieutenant who was there—and who never forgot it.

### **'The Worst Day of My Life!'**

Over the course of 30 years, I had occasion to interview the late Maryland US Senator Daniel B Brewster many times about his war experiences on Guam and Okinawa. Commissioned in 1943, he retired as a colonel, and died at age 83 on 19 August 2007. Following are some of his reflections of his combat on Okinawa.

'We took only a handful of prisoners. The Japanese just didn't surrender. Our men weren't much of a mind to take prisoners, and they [the Japanese] took no prisoners at all. It was a battle to the death. I'd already seen so many people killed, including my own men, that I had no feeling whatsoever for the Japanese. We really didn't consider them human beings. They were the enemy...'

On 1 April 1945, Brewster and his comrades were in their LSTs very early in the morning. 'On the second day, we attacked, deployed in a battalion column. My job was to lead the point platoon. We were attacking up a ravine. The whole hillside above a rice paddy blazed with fire from scores of cleverly concealed caves in the almost vertical cliffs.'

Seven Marines were soon badly wounded. One platoon was pinned down, and another ran into heavy machine gun fire. 'As we gained the crest of a ridge, a Marine who ran toward the cave with a grenade was killed before he could throw it. The entire machine gun team was destroyed before it could fire a shot. This was my covering base of fire.'

His group was 'hopelessly pinned down in the center of the ravine. Six Marines were killed trying to reestablish communications.' By now, Lt Brewster had already been wounded twice. 'We were pinned down and cut off for most of the day. My walkie-talkie was hit, and my runner was killed. I sent two more runners back, and both were killed. I managed to swim and crawl through an irrigation ditch to make contact between the two groups. The Japanese attacked both of our little units twice, but we fought them off with grenades and rifle fire. We could see them 20 feet away. We'd shoot them at almost point-blank range, and throw grenades... and they'd throw

the grenades back at us... We were fighting for our lives! It was the worst day of my life! I thought I'd be killed... When the day was over, I'd walked in with some 70 men, and 17 walked out. Everybody else was dead or wounded. My wounds were this scar you see on my forehead, so my face was all covered with blood... A bullet had grazed my heel. That was 2 April 1945.'

Early in May, Brewster called over his platoon sergeant. 'As I was talking to him, a mortar shell landed in his shoulder and blew his head off, and put fragments through both my legs, knocking me down. We dug in as fast as we could. We were shelled all night long and we took several direct hits and heavy casualties... The flamethrower tanks were the very best weapon we had, where the cannon barrel was used for napalm instead of the usual 75mm shell. The tank would lead the way.

'In the whole battle, I never took a

prisoner. My unit never took a prisoner, and we killed hundreds of Japanese. When we saw them, we would shoot them; wounded or not, they would still throw grenades. Suddenly, there was a blinding explosion, and a shell went off between the photographer and Green. Green was severely wounded, and the photographer was blown to pieces... I felt something sting my face...

'A day or so later, I rejoined the unit for the attack on Oruku Peninsula and the Admiral's Cave [where he] had committed suicide. We took that hill, cave, and little peninsula in the same type of hand-to-hand fighting... We were in the line day after day. When they got out in the open, we slaughtered them. I was lying there napping, when I felt somebody stumble in on top of me. I pushed him up while he was stabbing me with a knife. My runner killed him.

'The Japanese civilians took a terrible beating. We would wait until anybody

### **Journalist Casualty**

Of the unopposed landing of 1 April 1945, famed American Scripps Howard newspaper chain columnist and war correspondent Ernie Pyle, 44, wrote: 'We were at Okinawa an hour and a half after H-Hour, without being shot at, and hadn't even gotten our feet wet!'

Born Ernest Taylor Pyle on 3 August 1900, he enjoyed widespread fame in over 300 newspapers during 1935-45, and had his columns published in four books as well. At 18, Pyle joined the US Navy Reserve, and thus saw three months' active duty during the First World War, being hired as a cub reporter in 1921. Hating deskwork, he resigned five years later, and began writing a series of travel articles that brought him fast fame. During 1928-32, Pyle was America's premier aviation columnist, winning praise from aviatrix Amelia Earhart.

Becoming a war correspondent in 1942, he concentrated on the common American fighting man, rather than on generals and their battles, covering them in the US, North Africa, Europe, and the Pacific, winning a coveted Pulitzer Prize in 1944. Pyle was portrayed by the actor Burgess Meredith in the war film 'The Story of GI Joe'.

On 18 April 1945, Pyle was riding in a jeep with four others on the island of Ie Shima, off the main island of Okinawa. Coming under enemy machine gun fire,



**Famed American war correspondent Ernie Pyle was killed by enemy fire during the fighting on Okinawa. Here he is seen aboard the USS Cabot. (US Navy)**

they leapt into a nearby ditch. Raising his head, Pyle was hit in the temple by either a sniper's bullet or the machine gun, and was killed.

Buried with his helmet still on, Pyle was exhumed from his wartime grave and moved to Hawaii's famous National Memorial Cemetery. A stone memorial stands where he was killed: 'At this spot, the 77th Infantry lost a buddy, Ernie Pyle, 18 April 1945.' Stated President Harry Truman: 'More than any other man, he became the spokesman of the ordinary American-in-arms doing so many extraordinary things.' He was one of the few civilians during the war to be awarded the Purple Heart medal.





**Imperial Japanese Army General Mitsuru Ushijima, commander of the Okinawa garrison defending the island. (Mrs Sosaku Suzuki, LC)**

## Japanese Commanders

### Ushijima

Mitsuru Ushijima, nicknamed the Demon General, was born on 31 July 1887 in Kagashima City, Japan, and graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1908, and from the Army Staff College in 1916 during the Great War. He took part in the Siberian Intervention and the Second Sino-Japanese War between the world wars. A brigade and divisional commander between the main wars, Ushijima also was commandant of the Toyama Army Infantry School, and in 1939 was promoted to the grade of lieutenant general.

During the early part of the Second World War, he commanded troops both in China and Burma, and became a commandant again, both of the NCO Academy and the IJA Academy in Japan itself during 1942-44. He was given command in August 1944 of the ocean island fortress of Okinawa, defended by the 32nd Army of about 120,000 men overall. This initially encompassed the following IJA units: 9th, 24th, and 62nd Divisions, as well as the 44th Independent Brigade. The loss of the 9th

IJA Division to another theater before the Okinawan battle commenced, forced General Ushijima to enlist many native home guard units from Okinawa proper.

The Japanese commander was described as being a humane man who discouraged his senior officers from striking their subordinates, and who disliked displays of anger because he considered it a base emotion. According to staff members, Ushijima was a calm and very capable officer who evoked confidence among his soldiers. When he received the enemy commander's offer of surrender on 17 June 1945 at his headquarters, Ushijima answered: 'As a Samurai, it is not consonant with my honor to entertain such a proposal.'

### Cho

In contrast was the temperament of Ushijima's subordinate chief of staff, called 'Butcher' Cho by author David Bergamini. Cho served Japanese Prince Asaka in that same capacity during the very brutal IJA rape of Nanking in China in 1937, in which thousands were slaughtered.

Isamu Cho was born on 19 January 1895 in Fukuoka Prefecture in Japan, and graduated from the IJA Academy in

1916 and the Staff College in 1928. His early military service was in the radically politicized Kwantung Army in eastern China, and he also took part in several rightwing Army coups against civilian politicians in Japan. His later service included tours of duty in the puppet state of Manchukuo, on the border with the Soviet Union, on Taiwan, and in French Indochina, now Vietnam.

During 1942-44, General Cho commanded the 10th IJA Division, and was promoted to lieutenant general in 1944 before becoming chief of staff to Ushijima's 32nd Army. In basic disagreement with his commander's defensive 'shugettsu' or bleeding strategy, Cho recommended instead the failed massed banzai assaults that the Americans destroyed.

A violent man who smoked and drank too much, General Cho was known for slapping subordinates in the face. Ruthlessly, Cho asserted 'The Army's mission is to win, and it will not allow itself to be defeated by helping starving civilians'—seizing all food supplies for his troops. Beaten, he and his superior committed ritual suicide together rather than give themselves up. Cho's final message was 'I depart without regret, shame, or obligations.'

### Yahara

General Ushijima wisely refused to allow 32nd Army operations officer Col. Yahara to kill himself: 'If you die, there will be no one left who knows the truth about the battle of Okinawa! Bear the temporary shame, but endure it! This is an order of your Army commander.' Yahara obeyed, and escaped from the death cave disguised as an English teacher, but was eventually captured.

Born 12 October 1902, Yahara joined the Army in 1923, and taught strategy at the IJA War College. He it was who persuaded Ushijima to adopt the defensive war of attrition strategy on Okinawa to bleed white the Americans, as opposed to Cho's failed massed banzai charges. Acknowledging his error, Cho then allowed Yahara to return to his former tactical practice of retreat and defend.

Yahara's US Army interrogation officer noted: 'Quiet and unassuming, yet possessed of a keen mind and a fine discernment, Colonel Yahara is, from all reports, an eminently capable officer, described by some POWs as "the brain" of the 32nd Army.' In 1973, he published his first-hand account book, 'The Battle for Okinawa'. Yahara died in 1981, aged 78.

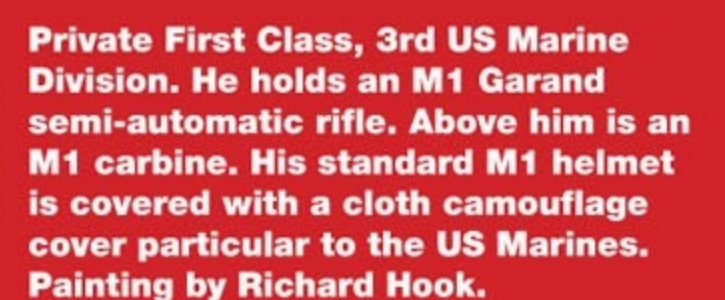


‘We thought we were better—and that the Marines were better than the Army—and that we were all better than the Japanese! This was part of our training, to think that our unit was the best.’

On 22 June 1945, the beaten

Noted one US infantryman: ‘There was some return fire from a few of the houses, but the others were probably occupied by civilians. We didn’t care. It was a terrible thing not to distinguish between the enemy and women and children.’ Other Japanese soldiers killed themselves with hand grenades, but the island had fallen.

Churchill called Okinawa ‘among the most intense and famous battles in military history.’ It was returned to Japan in 1972. In 1995, the prefecture dedicated the Cornerstone of Peace Memorial at Mabuni, scene of the last fighting, with all the names of those who died—240,734 by 2008 •







# Bludgeoned at Bullecourt

Exemplifying the worst of Western Front trench warfare, PAUL KENDALL argues that the hard lessons learned at Bullecourt helped improve the tank as a battle-winning weapon.





**Idealised contemporary view of British tank in action on the Western Front. Events at Bullecourt would reveal the vulnerabilities of the new weapon. Illustration published in *The Sphere* c1917.**

**T**he battle for Bullecourt during April and May 1917 was a savage and embittered fight for a village that was reduced to rubble that cost the lives of approximately 10,000 Australian and 7,000 British soldiers. Three British and three Australian Divisions from General Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army were committed to capturing Bullecourt and piercing the formidable Hindenburg Line defences to enable British cavalry to charge towards Cambrai in an effort to aid General Allenby's breakout from Arras. There was no breakthrough in the stalemate on the Western Front during early 1917.

German forces had built a formidable defensive system known as the Hindenburg Line which was fortified for 85 miles from Arras to the Champagne region by acres of densely thick barbed wire fields, deep trenches and strategically placed machine gun posts positioned to create maximum devastation to the enemy. The village of Bullecourt lay at the southern end of the Arras battle front, and the fighting there over a period of six weeks from 11 April until late May 1917 epitomised the bloody trench warfare of World War One.

### **Tanks lose direction**

The opening day of the operation to capture Bullecourt was an abysmal failure. Twelve tanks from No11 Company, D Battalion was allocated to the Australian 4th Brigade to support their assault. General Gough had been convinced by tank commanders who overestimated their vehicles' abilities that tanks could lead a surprise assault on a 1500 yard front at Bullecourt and flatten paths through the fields of barbed wire entanglements that formed part of the Hindenburg Line trenches for the Australian infantry to follow. There was no artillery support and total reliance was placed upon this new weapon, which had demonstrated only limited success since its first appearance at Flers on 15 September 1916 and was prone to breakdown and malfunction.

The impulsive Gough did not consider whether Bullecourt was defended in strength, the impact of the artillery bombardment of the wire, nor did he consider the reality that tanks were vulnerable to mechanical failure. He agreed for the attack to go ahead during the early hours of 10 April despite there being no time to train the tank crews or

Australian infantry in this new strategy. During 1917, the strategy of infantry advancing behind a creeping barrage was being developed. The idea of infantry advancing behind tanks had not been tested. With no time to prepare for the operation and heavy snow falling, the tank crews and Australian infantry were heading for disaster.

Only four of the 12 British tanks designated to support the infantry from the 4th Australian Brigade arrived at the agreed starting time at 4.30 a.m. on 11 April 1917. The remaining eight tanks either lost direction in the snow blizzard or broke down. The bombardment of the German wire at Bullecourt since 3 April had proved ineffective for when the attack took place on the 11th, it was found to be intact. The tanks were meant to lead Australian Infantry across No Man's Land and flatten channels through the barbed wire for them to cross. The Australian infantry were about to launch an attack



**Welcome to Bullecourt Sign. The villagers from this remote French village still remember the sacrifices made by so many men to fight for their freedom and liberty. This welcome sign, together with the Bullecourt Digger Memorial, Australian Cross Memorial, Slouched Hat Memorial and Tank Memorial demonstrates that the people of Bullecourt have not forgotten those men.**

on strongly fortified trenches at Bullecourt named OG1 and OG2 with adequate tank and artillery support.

The success of the operation depended entirely upon the tanks. Despite the lack of tank and artillery support, the Australian





**Aerial photograph of Bullecourt taken by Royal Flying Corps reconnaissance plane on 22 April 1917. It was taken after the first battle and prior to the second battle when soldiers from West Yorkshire, Devonshire, London, Wales and Scotland would be sent into the ruins of this village in order to capture it during May 1917.**

infantry valiantly fought their way into the German trenches. Australian soldiers charged from their starting positions across the snow covered No Man's Land during that disastrous morning. They were mown down by German machine gun fire and German observers positioned at Hendecourt could provide ranges for German artillery to target their shells. Before the Australian infantry had reached the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt they had to get through dense thick barbed wire entanglements. Many of them frantically used their bayonets to

hack a path through the wire.

It was a scene of carnage as flesh and bone tried to overcome German wire and the machine gun fire in front of them and from their right and left flanks. Despite their numbers severely savaged by the murderous machine guns, the remnants of the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade fought through the German wire and got into the trenches of the Hindenburg Line. They had accomplished an impossible task. Here they held sections of the trenches until their supplies of ammunition were exhausted.

### **Intense fire**

Attacking German reinforcements were aware that the Australians had no more ammunition left when the Australian's began to throw German stick grenades as they defended their positions. They had two options. As they were slowly becoming surrounded by the enemy, the Australians had to choose, either to surrender or to make a desperate dash across No Man's Land. Many soldiers decided to risk death and run through the hailstorm of German shells and machine gun bullets.





Sergeant Henry Choules, who was born in Oldham, Hampshire in England and served with the 16th Battalion AIF held his section of captured German trench for several hours and was awarded the Military Medal for his actions at Bullecourt. His recommendation stated: 'He showed great coolness and excellent leadership in steadying his men and keeping them well in hand during the advance. In the enemy trenches his organization of the counter bomb work went well far towards enabling us to hold on as long as we did. Throughout

the operation he displayed a magnificent courage and devotion to duty.'

The Australian 4th Brigade was almost annihilated due to its participation at Bullecourt for it had lost 3,289 at the first Bullecourt battle on 11 April, including 1,170 prisoners of the war. This was the highest number of Australian prisoners captured in one place during the war.

The British tank crews too were let down by their commanders by being committed to an attack using Mark II Tanks, which were not armour plated and were training tanks that were not meant to have been used in battle. The Tank's capabilities had been greatly exaggerated with no allowance for their mechanical failings being considered. Only four tanks had reached the starting position at the scheduled starting time. The tank crews inside were within the hot confines of their cabins; as the tank jolted at two miles per hour over shell holes, they frequently fell onto the hot engine manifolds.

Although they were inside a tank, they were just as exposed from the German machine gun and shellfire. Second Lieutenants Eric Money and Harold Clarkson managed to inflict casualties amongst the 124th German Infantry Regiment that was defending OG1 and OG 2 trenches at Bullecourt. Clarkson's Tank 586 got to the German trenches east of the Central Road, where it was knocked out. Captain Harry Murray from the 13th Battalion AIF managed to squeeze past Clarkson's tank to get into the German occupied trenches.

One crewman from Tank 586 did make a brave attempt to try and get the tank operational under a hailstorm of machine gun fire. Lance Corporal Bert Knowles from 13th Battalion AIF recalled: 'A tank [the only one which got so far] penetrated the front line of wire, which, by the way, was about four or five yards across and became a hopeless wreck. In passing fairly close to it, I remember a chap standing near the front of it, with a short plank, trying to lever a piece of iron from amongst the big cogs beneath the wheels, and cursing like a bullock whilst the bullets were rattling like hail on the tank itself'.

Money's tank became entangled with the dense barbed wire and as he moved his tank backwards and forwards in a futile effort to extricate himself and his crew from this perilous situation, German shells descended upon the tank. One shell hit the petrol tank and the entire fuselage became engulfed in a blazing inferno. Money and the crew

died a horrific death, burnt alive as they sat inside their tank. Second Lieutenant Harold Davies in Tank 799 managed to reach the German trenches south of Riencourt and inflict casualties upon the enemy but was knocked out by armour piercing bullets fired from a machine gun.

Second Lieutenant Hugh Skinner's tank experienced mechanical problems and had arrived at the starting position at 9.00am, nearly 2 \_ hours after the scheduled start time. Skinner had mistakenly assumed that the Australian infantry had captured its objectives and secured OG 1 and OG 2 trenches. He drove his tank into Bullecourt. He was the only tank officer to enter the village and fire at any visible German soldiers. His tank attracted heavy fire causing little flakes of metal to fly around the insides of the tank. The tank got caught on the lip of a shell crater and was unable to move. German forces rushed a mortar close to their position. It was at that point that Skinner realised that



**Second Lieutenant Harold Davies**  
– Commanded Tank 799 and was killed during the first Battle of Bullecourt. He has no known grave and his name is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.



Australian forces had not secured their objectives and that they were isolated. Unable to move the tank, Skinner ordered his crew to evacuate the tank and taking with them valuable parts of the tanks armament they managed to get back to the Australian lines under heavy fire. Skinner was subsequently awarded the Military Cross for his actions at Bullecourt.

### Unfairly condemned

The British tank crews suffered heavily during the First Bullecourt engagement. They entered the battle with 103 men and lost 52. The Germans had captured Tank 799 and Tank 586, and these were the first tanks that they captured during the war. The British tankers have been the target of much condemnation from their Australian counterparts after Bullecourt, but the tank crews who took part in the assault on Bullecourt had made a brave attempt to carry out their orders, despite being given training tanks with no armour plating to protect them. They had no time to prepare for the operation, which was changed hours before Zero Hour.

With no protection, they were sitting targets and must have felt very uncomfortable inside these tanks. As well as being exposed to machine gun and shellfire, they were continuously jolted as they crossed craters, constantly burnt themselves as they fell onto the hot engine components and felt noxious due to the intense heat and fumes within the confines of the tank. During April 2010 the British Tank crews who assaulted Bullecourt in 1917 were commemorated when a memorial was unveiled in their honour, next to the section of tank track that came from Clarkson's Tank 586.

It took a further six weeks for British and Australian infantry to capture the village. The 62nd Division suffered heavily on 3 May, as they were met by a massive German artillery barrage as they advanced towards the trenches at Bullecourt. These infantrymen from West Yorkshire followed a creeping artillery barrage and eight British tanks. Three tanks managed to get into Bullecourt, but it was not enough to capture the village. The assault of the 62nd Division was an utter disaster as they lost direction due to being blinded by the dust and smoke from the German barrage. Many of these men were mown down by German machine gun fire as they became entangled in the German barbed wire defences. Those men who did breakthrough and held onto shell craters amidst the rubble of the

village soon found themselves isolated. The 62nd Division lost heavily. The 2nd/6th West Yorkshire Regiment sent 340 men to attack the fortress at Bullecourt. The remnants of this battalion amounted to 100 men after the failed attack to capture the village.

Elements of the 2nd Australian Division had fought their way into the Hindenburg Line east of Bullecourt on 3 May and were still in possession of a fragile foothold in the German trenches. If they were to keep hold of these sections of captured German trenches, it was imperative that Bullecourt be captured. As the attack of the 62nd Division fizzled out, the 2nd Honourable Artillery Company and the 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers, from the British 7th Division

were ordered to launch an assault upon the village. It seemed sheer folly to send in two battalions to capture an objective that an entire Division had tried but failed to take.

At 10.30pm during the night of 3 May, soldiers from these two battalions advanced across the battlefield littered with shell holes and the bodies of their fallen comrades from the West Yorkshire battalions killed earlier that day. They charged in the dark with fixed bayonets but they too were cut down by German machine gunners holding well-fortified positions. Snipers targeted officers and NCOs. The operation was a complete shambles and the 2nd Honourable Artillery failed to capture Bullecourt. The battalion was subsequently decimated,

**Tank 799 was commanded by 2nd Lieutenant Harold Davies and succeeded in reaching the German trenches of the Hindenburg Line. It was one of the first tanks captured by German forces during World War One. Here German soldiers pose beside this tank after the battle of Bullecourt.**







losing 11 officers and 200 men. The 1st Royal Welch Regiment lost 87 men.

### **Fragile foothold**

The 2nd Royal Warwickshire and the 20th Manchester Regiment were the next battalions to assault Bullecourt on 4 May. The 20th Manchesters failed to get started for 80% of their battalion was slaughtered by a German barrage as they assembled by the Railway Embankment. The 2nd Royal Warwickshire's would lose 50% of its strength as a battalion.

Bullecourt was heavily fortified by German forces prior to the battle. The Germans occupied the high ground and held the advantage. The village was guarded by acres of dense fields of barbed wire entanglements, deeply

dug trenches that were connected by a labyrinth of underground tunnels. German commanders would place limited numbers of sentries in the frontline and when an assault was imminent they would deploy reserves from the rear and men concealed in the underground tunnels beneath Bullecourt would resurface and repel the British attackers.

As the British launched several unsuccessful assaults on the village, the Australian battalions were holding onto their fragile foothold in the trenches of the Hindenburg Line east of Bullecourt. A joint British Australian effort to dislodge the German stranglehold over Bullecourt succeeded on 7 May when elements from the 2nd Gordon Highlanders, dressed in kilts supported

by the 8th Devonshire Regiment entered the south eastern sector of the village and established contact with their Australian counterparts from the 9th Battalion. They also made contact with a party of ten men led by Corporal Reginald Billingham from the 2nd Honourable Artillery Company who had assaulted Bullecourt on the night of 4 May, and were encircled behind German lines while holding a shell hole within Bullecourt for four days. During those days of isolation behind enemy lines, they had to resort to scavenging for food, water and ammunition from the dead that lay around them. The 2nd Gordon Highlanders lost heavily in forcing an entry into the impregnable village, losing seven officers and 179 men. The 9th





**Private Cecil Hide** was among British born Australian soldiers listed as missing. Born in Eastbourne, England he served with the 16th Battalion on the Somme in 1916 and was killed by a German sniper as he was advancing to the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt on 11 April 1917. He has no known grave and his name is listed on the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux.



**Sergeant Henry Choules**, who was born in Oldham, Hampshire in England and served with the 16th Battalion AIF held his section of captured German trench for several hours and was awarded the Military Medal for his actions at Bullecourt.



**Captain F. H. S. Satchwell** (H.A.C.), missing. Write 125, Sunny-gardens, Hendon, N.W.

**Captain Frank Satchewell**, 2nd Honourable Artillery Company, killed at Bullecourt on 3rd May 1917. His wife Gertrude placed appeals for information in newspapers in the years after his death at Bullecourt until she died of a broken heart in 1922.

battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916 and was the subject of Peter Corlett's 'Cobbers' statue at Fromelles and in Melbourne. Fraser was killed on 11 May 1917 by a shell at Bullecourt.

Private Cecil Hide was among the British born Australian soldiers listed as missing. Born in Eastbourne, England he served with the Australian 16th Battalion on the Somme in 1916 and was killed by a German sniper as he was advancing to the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt on 11th April 1917. He has no known grave and his name is listed on the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux.

The families of the missing soldiers were left in a sense of limbo. With no known grave, despite definite confirmations of death from comrades, many parents and wives were hopeful that their missing sons would return home. There were feelings of bewilderment and for them they could not accept that their loved ones would not return home. The families had no sense of closure in these tragic circumstances. Captain Frank Satchwell was killed at Bullecourt on 3 May 1917 while leading an assault on the village with the 2nd Honourable Artillery Company. His wife Gertrude placed appeals in newspapers for information about her missing husband in the years after his death at Bullecourt until she died of a broken heart in 1922.

The Bullecourt missing may be far from home, but they still rest in the fields surrounding the village. There is evidence to suggest that a group of 200 dead Australian soldiers were hastily buried in

Battalion AIF lost 180 men.

By the first week in May, the Arras offensive had lost momentum and Field Marshal Haig was turning his attention to commencing an offensive in Flanders. Possession of the ruins of Bullecourt would have no bearing on the future direction of the war. Its only strategic importance would be to straighten the British/Australian line, but Haig ordered the continuation of the battle for Bullecourt to keep hold of the enemy's forces on the Arras sector while he focused upon the next campaign in Flanders.

Further initiatives to capture the entire village were made during the weeks that followed. Soldiers from Manchester, Devonshire and London were sent into the village. They fought amongst the rubble at close quarters with their German enemy. The Post Office Rifles, a London Regiment, finally secured the complete capture of Bullecourt which had been reduced to rubble on 17 May 1917.

The village was in British hands, but the overall objective to make a sufficient gap in the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt to enable Gough's 4th Cavalry Divisions to break through the German lines and join Allenby's three cavalry divisions at Arras to deliver a decisive defeat upon the German Army and win the war had failed. The loss of 10,000 Australian and 7,000 British soldiers was a disastrous tragedy and Bullecourt would be a lesson for all

military commanders in how not to conduct a battle.

### **Bullecourt missing**

At Bullecourt, 2,249 Australian soldiers and 1,875 British soldiers were listed as missing and have no known graves. They lie in those fields today. Among those listed as missing was 2nd Lieutenant Simon Fraser. He fought at the ill-fated

**The Bullecourt Digger Memorial** commemorates the Australian soldiers who died at Bullecourt. Many of those men were born in Britain and emigrated to Australia prior to World War One.





a shell hole soon after the first battle on 11 April. Sergeant Frederick Peachey was captured on that day and was forced to bury dead comrades in a shell hole with their identity discs by his German captors.

As Bullecourt fades into distant history, awareness of the battle is becoming awakened due to the remains of some the listed missing being found. Sergeant John White, 22nd Battalion AIF was killed on 3 May while attacking the German trenches at Bullecourt. His remains were found by a local farmer in 1994 and interred in the Queant Road Cemetery with full military honours during the following year in the presence of his daughter. In 2009 the remains of Captain John Pritchard, who was killed on 15 May 1915 while assaulting the village, were recovered from Bullecourt. This case is currently being investigated by the Ministry of Defence and it is intended that his remains will be interred in HAC Cemetery in the near future.

The battle caused much consternation due to the failure of British tanks in supporting Australian infantry during the First Bullecourt battle on 11 April. As well as consuming the lives of many British and Australian soldiers, the way that Gough conducted the battle of Bullecourt caused the Australians to become skeptical about British command. Their confidence of British commanders was badly shaken, especially after the mistakes that were made during the first Bullecourt battle. The 4th Australian Brigade was so badly mauled on that they were withdrawn from the line for several months so that the division could

train replacement soldiers and re-establish their fighting capability. There existed a deep resentment by Australian troops towards their British commanders.

The lessons learnt from this battle did eventually play a role in the overall victory over the German occupiers of France and Belgium. During the Second World War, the success of the Normandy Landings on D-Day in 1944 might never have been achieved if the failure of Dieppe in 1942

did not show the allies how not to make an amphibious assault. In World War One, the first battle of Bullecourt demonstrated to allied commanders how not to conduct a battle. The failure of the tanks highlighted their weaknesses.

It was a report written by the controversial Victoria Cross recipient, Captain Albert Jacka on the failure of the tanks at Bullecourt that was studied by General Monash a year later, while he was preparing for his attack upon Hamel. Jacka was critical of the Tank commanders for not arriving at the starting point on time, their lack of knowledge of the operation, poor communication between tank crews and Australian infantry. Monash studied the errors made at Bullecourt and made sure that they would never be made again.

By reading about the tanks failings, he was able to use the tank as a weapon of strength and used in conjunction with infantry, artillery and air support, they could be effectively deployed in battle with low casualties. Monash would capture targeted objectives at Hamel using the resources of modern warfare in 93 minutes on 4 July 1918. It was Monash's strategy at Hamel that was adopted at Amiens on 8 August 1918 and would eventually culminate in overall victory over Germany within five months. Bullecourt was a lesson in how not to conduct a battle and the sacrifices made by so many soldiers would devastate many families in Britain and Australia. Bullecourt was captured, but the terrible sacrifices made it a costly and flawed victory •



**The turret from Tank 799 is on display at the Jean and Denise Letaille Bullecourt Museum.**



**Tank Memorial at Bullecourt. Unveiled in April 2010, it commemorates the British Tank crews that took part in the battle for the village in 1917. It stands adjacent to a section of tank track that belonged to Tank 586 commanded by 2nd Lieutenant Harold Clarkson.**





# SPAWN OF THE HUNS

Riding in the wake of the Huns, other warrior hordes won an equally ferocious reputation for themselves, claims RICHARD BULL.

**T**he Huns forever lurked in the minds of medieval men. They were the most notorious of the warriors from the eastern plains: all others followed in their wake. Four centuries after their destruction, Notker, chronicler of Charlemagne, recalled a tale told to him when a boy by a veteran soldier. 'The land of the Huns used to be encircled by

nine rings,' said the old man. 'These rings were fortifications. Very wide. Many miles separated them. The defences of each ring were built of logs of oak, beech and fir. These constructions were then filled with stones and heavy clay. They were eight paces deep and eight paces high. On top of the ramparts, sods of earth were piled. Small trees were then planted along each ring so that when

cut back and trained to bend forward, they presented an impenetrable screen of sharp branches and dense foliage. On the land between each ring, farms and houses were laid out, but so placed that any news of invasion could be transmitted by the blowing of a horn.'

Such a system of earthworks was not beyond the capabilities of early medieval rulers, but no evidence of these particular





Avar raiders confronted by Carolingian soldiers, early 9th century. Painting by Angus McBride.

ramparts has been found, and this story is essentially an indication of the fantastic achievements attributed to the Huns. It is significant of the impact of the Huns that for hundreds of years afterwards, eastern mounted raiders from the steppes were still called by that name. For the warriors that Notker and his story teller called Huns were, in actual fact, another Eurasian confederation—the Avars.

### Pack of griffins

The Avars were no new menace. They had ravaged the Empire of the Franks over two centuries before and fabulous

reports of their origin had been heard in Constantinople. A pack of griffins, half eagle, half lion, had erupted in the wastes of Asia and before them they drove a ferocious group of warriors. No sooner had the Eastern emperors seen the last of the Huns than this next onslaught of horse-archers was upon them, perhaps driven on by droughts or the expanding campaigns of an even fiercer people. The Avars were essentially of Turkish origin, from around the Caucasus and southern Russia. Among their ranks were the descendants of the hordes of Attila who had retreated to the lands north of the Black Sea. As they pushed westwards, the Bulgars and Slavs were disturbed into action. 'These Barbarians have reduced the whole of the Balkans to a second Scythian desert,' concluded Procopius in his *Secret History* of the reign of Justinian. The region was scarred by war, disease and famine. Any major armed resistance to the raiders was quashed by the Emperor who wished to employ the various Barbarian factions against each other.

With their marauding unopposed, the Avars, Slavs and Bulgars became even more daring and outrageous. So that in the end, shocked by the sight of their ransacked farms, and with their wives and children enslaved, Balkan civilians and farmers formed themselves into groups of local resistance. Often they were successful, ambushing bandits laden with booty, but once word of this reached the Imperial authorities, government troops were sent to harass the farmers, forcing them to return the horses and plunder they had taken from the raiders. To the inhabitants of the Balkans, the Byzantines were as great a menace as the Barbarians. Within the massive walls of Constantinople, the close presence of the Eurasian nomads served only to inspire a new fashion among the wild young men of the city. To set themselves apart, one street gang—the Blues—wore bizarre clothing after the style of the 'Huns', that is, the Avars. They cut the hair on the front of their heads right back, but allowed the hair behind to hang down in a tangled mass. They wore tunics belted very tight at the waist that then spread out to their shoulders, giving them the appearance of muscle men. In addition, they wore the capes, trousers and shoes typical of steppe warriors. This gang caused much trouble in the city: robbing people at night, rioting during the day. Little was done to stop them, for the Emperor was said to favour them over the Greens, another gang deriving from opposing sports supporters.

In their wars against the Byzantines, the

Avars employed guile as much as brute force. During the reign of Tiberius II, towards the end of the 6th century, the Kagan of the Avars asked the Emperor if he would be gracious enough to let him share some of the luxuries of civilisation by having Byzantine technicians build a bath house for him. No doubt seeing this as a sign of future good relations, the Emperor despatched expert craftsmen immediately. But when they arrived, it was not a complex of saunas and hot and cold pools that the Kagan was expecting them to build. He wanted a bridge across the Danube. At sword-point the Byzantines acquiesced, and the Avars surged over the river into the Balkans. On another occasion, Avar attempts to outwit the Byzantines backfired. In 562, merchant envoys were instructed to travel to Constantinople on behalf of the Avars and there acquire arms and armour skilfully manufactured by the Byzantines, thus equipping the Avars for a campaign against the self-same citizens. But Imperial intelligence was one step ahead. Once the merchants had handed over their money and bundled up the weaponry, they were seized by the Byzantine authorities and their goods confiscated. In this way, the Avars made an unwitting contribution to their enemy's balance of trade.

### Fighting fashion

By the 8th century, the Avars had left the wealth of the Byzantines to other raiders and were in conflict with the Germanic kingdoms of the West. Settled in the old Roman province of Pannonia, the dwellings of their Khan grew splendid with all their pickings from Italy, France and Germany. The Avar raiders were naturally excellent horsemen. The use of stirrups was widespread among them, and highly ornate spurs have been found where the prick-points feature little helmeted faces. In addition to their composite bows, spears and pattern-welded swords, it appears from archaeological evidence that they may also have favoured battle-axes, perhaps adopted from the Slavic tribesmen who had followed the Germanic migrations but were now dominated by the Avars.

The Franks, like all Germanic warriors, were never really happy fighting highly mobile horse-archers. With their feigned retreats and reluctance to close in until they had emptied their quivers, the keenness of the Franks for combat with sword and spear was constantly frustrated. And yet, over the course of a decade, Charlemagne and his retainers brought the Avar menace to heel. Warfare is obviously not just a matter of the most





German 19th century image of Magyar raider.

effective fighting fashion winning through. Political and strategic factors all contribute to victory or defeat, and it seems that Charlemagne may well have caught the Avars at a time when their control of Avar territory was weakening, while his political control was patently overwhelming. There is, however, a distinct difference in the manner of Frankish warfare under Charlemagne, which appears unique to his period.

The bow was not a weapon widely used by Germanic horse-warriors, for despite its obvious effectiveness, it was not considered noble enough to displace the sword and spear of the mounted man. Nevertheless, in a letter to the Abbot Fulrad, Charlemagne instructed him to supply his army with horsemen equipped specifically with shield, lance, sword, dagger, and bow and arrows. Elsewhere, in a manuscript of 803, each landlord is asked to equip their warriors with a lance, shield, a bow and two bowstrings plus 12 arrows. In this *Capitularis Aquisgranense*, there is a sentence that says that two

men are required to have these weapons between them. This may suggest that a mounted warrior was expected to carry lance and sword, while a dismounted man — a squire, perhaps—used the bow. This would certainly fit the status of weapons common in Western Europe. However, the summons to Abbot Fulrad does not make this distinction and some military historians have suggested that Charlemagne armed his horse-warriors with bows especially to counter the Avars, although the skill of these Frankish archers cannot have been as refined as that of the Eurasians.

Despite uncertainty regarding the Frankish use of the bow, the Carolingian war-machine was undoubtedly well organised. In the written instructions issued from Charlemagne's various royal residences, there are fascinating descriptions of the wagon trains that would be used to carry the burden of his campaigns against the pagans. 'The wagons that accompany our warriors as war-carts shall be well-constructed,' says one manuscript. 'Their

coverings shall be made of animal skins and sewn together so that when crossing a river, the provisions inside will remain dry. It is also our wish that a goodly amount of flour and wine shall be placed in each cart.'

Another manuscript lists further the equipment to be carried in each wagon: 'Food in abundance, stone handmills, adzes, axes, carpenters' tools, and slings with men who can use them properly. Stones are to be brought for these slings, on 20 pack-horses if needs be . . .' These latter weapons translated as slings may well be catapults or ballistae. With such logistical backup, in the Roman manner, Charlemagne undoubtedly had an advantage over his less organised adversaries. This is probably what brought him victory against the Avars. That the Franks may also have possessed more sophisticated weapons and armour than their enemies is suggested by the repeated prohibition on arms trading with foreign countries. 'Concerning traders who travel in the territories of the Slavs and the Avars,' begins a *Capitulary* of 805. 'They



must not take weapons and coats of mail with them to sell. If they are caught carrying them, their entire stock is to be confiscated.'

### Fireball from Heaven

The Franks were not the only Imperialists worried about giving away their military advantages. The Greek Fire of the Byzantines was an obsessively guarded secret weapon. Emperor Constantine VII in writing to his son in the 10th century continued the tradition of secrecy. 'If you are ever asked to divulge information about the making of liquid fire discharged through tubes, you must reply, "This was revealed by God through an angel to the great and holy Constantine, the first Christian Emperor. And we are assured by the faithful witness of our fathers and grandfathers that it should only be manufactured among the Christians and in their capital city and nowhere else." For it happened once that one of our military commanders was bribed by the heathens and handed over some fire to them. God could not leave such a transgression unavenged and so when the man entered the holy church of God, a fire-ball was sent down from heaven and completely consumed him.'

From the 7th to the 9th century, the Avars dominated central Europe. Over the same period, to the east, the Bulgars controlled those parts of the Balkans they had wrestled from the Byzantines as well as the lower Danube area. To the east of them, in southern Russia, there was the mighty kingdom of the Khazars. Like the Avars, both these latter tribal confederations were essentially Turkish. Amongst them were the remnants of the Huns. In their midst, also, were Slavic tribes who, though largely subjugated, increasingly rose in revolt against their Eurasian masters. The Avars shamelessly exploited the Slavs who lived under their authority. They spent the winter with these Slavs, sleeping with their wives and daughters and living off Slav tributes.

In battle, the Avars were said to herd the Slavs into their front lines, waiting for them to blunt the fighting and only then joining in the battle to insure victory and a majority of the plunder. Eventually, the half-caste sons of the Avars and their Slav women found the situation intolerable and rose successfully against the nomad bandits. Like Notker after him, the chronicler of these acts, Fredegar, also called the Avars 'Huns'.

The Bulgars and Khazars were mail-clad horse-warriors with bow, sword and spear. Frequently fighting among each other,

they also clashed with the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Slavs and the Rus. The Khazars were the most powerful of the steppe confederations. Their tribes controlled land north of the Caucasian mountains, from the Black Sea to the Caspian. Because of this position, they proved a useful bulwark against any Muslim invasion of eastern Europe via the Caucasus. The Byzantines frequently entered into peace treaties with them. Because of the profit, both political and material, to be obtained from this role as a neutral third power, the Khazar leaders had to think carefully about their religious status. By remaining nomadic heathens, they would gain neither the respect of the Arabs nor the Byzantines, being regarded merely as useful Barbarians. However, if they chose either Christianity or Islam, that would mean spiritual, and thus political, alignment with either Caliph or Emperor. In the event, the Khazars shrewdly chose to convert to that other faith of the People of the Book—Judaism. Subsequently, a union of nomadic Aryan Jews dominated southern Russia for several hundred years.

An Arabic chronicler described some of their traits: 'When the Khazars bring back their plunder from a raid, they pool it together in the camp. The leader then takes for himself what he wishes and leaves the rest to be divided amongst his warriors. When embarking for a campaign, the Khazar leader instructs every man to carry with him a sharp stake. On halting for the night, these stakes are then placed around the camp with shields hanging from them so as to form a palisade.'

In a passage more difficult to interpret, the Arabic sources conjure up a picture of the Khazar warlord riding before his army surrounded by a vanguard carrying either lighted candles and torches or bright, reflective metal discs. Such weird illumination probably acted as a kind of signalling or as a badge of rank. It may also have had a religious significance.

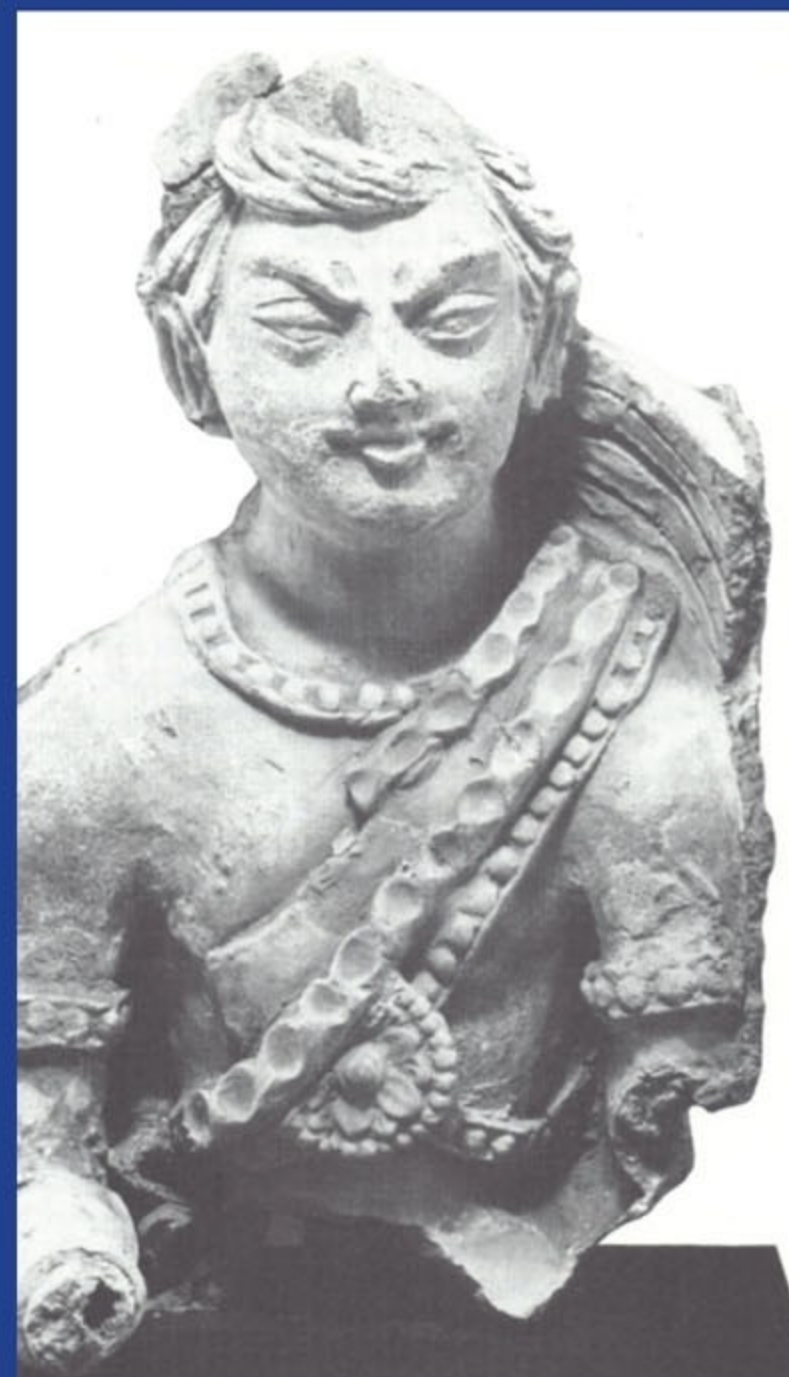
### Enter the Magyars

The domination of Eurasia by the Avars, Bulgars and the Khazars came to an end at the close of the 9th century. Migrating southwards from the Ural mountains, a group of tribes closely related to the Finns entered upon the battle-ground of the steppes. These were the Magyars. At first, they were subject to the Khazars, collecting taxes for their overlords from the Slavs. During this period the Magyars mixed with the Turkish tribesmen, and would have become proficient horsemen and archers, if they had not already been.

Certainly, by the last decades of the 9th century, when intertribal warfare intensified, the Magyars met their rivals on equal terms. In this ferocious activity, north of the Black Sea, a Turkish tribe—the Pechenegs—loomed large. The Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII recorded that 'their neighbours always look on the Pechenegs with dread and are held in check by them.' Even the Rus could not carry out raids into the Black Sea unless they were at peace with these



Avar bronze boar's head decoration, 8th century.



Warrior torso from central Asia, 8th to 10th century.

nomads. For whenever the Viking raiders reached cataracts along the southern Russian waterways, they were forced to shoulder their boats overland to quieter waters: and once caught on the riverbank by a band of hostile Pechenegs, the Rus were easily overwhelmed and cut to pieces.

The Pechenegs were described as having 'weapons in plenty, belts of silver, standards and short spears, and decorated trumpets which they sound in battle.' It was these



warriors who, according to the Emperor Constantine, were responsible for shifting the Magyars into Europe. While the Magyars were away from their families, raiding the territories of the Bulgars, the Pechenegs, encouraged by the Bulgar ruler, tore into the land of the Magyars and devastated their homes, slaughtering their wives, children and the few guards left behind. With their Khazar allies in decline, and faced with the incursions of the Pechenegs and the Rus, the Magyars may well have seen their move westwards as the easiest option. Entering Eastern Europe, they clashed unsuccessfully with the Bulgars. Having better luck against the Avars, already crushed and fragmented by Charlemagne, the Magyars pitched their tents in central Europe. From the plains of Hungary, the Magyars carried out relentless raids against the Germanic kingdoms of

the West. A terror that lasted for over half a century.

Liutprand's *Antapodosis* is a revealing account of Magyar incursions into Europe in the first quarter of the 10th century. His story begins with Arnulf, King of the eastern Carolingian territories, letting the Magyars into Western Europe. Hoping that the nomads would distract and hinder his enemies, Arnulf broke down the great earthworks that prevented the Magyars from advancing any further. Once in, the Magyars embarked on an orgy of pillage against Arnulf's enemies: but as soon as Arnulf was dead, even his own people were not safe from Magyar raids.

'No man ever wished more desperately for food or water than these savages desire a fight,' exclaimed Liutprand, 'their only joy is in battle.' Quoting an ancient historian, Jordanes, he then ascribed to the Magyars an old Hun custom. 'They scar their babies with knives so that they might bear the pain of wounds before receiving milk from their mothers' breasts.' Again, the latest Eurasian invaders and the Huns were seen as one and the same.

Fast losing hold of his recently acquired kingdom, Louis, son of Arnulf, gathered his forces together and confronted the raiders on the plains near the city of Augsburg. It was barely daybreak when the Magyars rode on the Bavarians in their camp. Yawning and rousing themselves for the day's confrontation, German warriors were suddenly assaulted from all sides by a hail of arrows. Some never awoke—transfixed in their beds. Darting to and fro, the Magyars caused great havoc. Stumbling out of their tents, with mail only half on, warriors had their heads split by Magyar sabres. Rallying themselves amidst the panic, Louis' men dashed after a retreating band of horse-archers but, of course, in familiar fashion, this was a deception and the ambush was drawn tight. Magyars pounced on the Germans and Louis was beaten, narrowly escaping the slaughter himself.

After such a defeat, Bavaria, Swabia, Saxony and eastern France lay open. Villages and monasteries were sacked and burnt, while clerics wondered what on earth their lords were doing about the Church's defence. More concerned about pursuing their dynastic feuds, however, the majority of German warlords tamely paid the Hungarians a tribute. Sitting out the storm behind the walls of their castles, the barons and dukes used this emergency as an excuse to tax their own people—part of which they kept themselves.

## No quarter given

Italy had always proved attractive to Barbarians and was no less so to the Magyars. On their first journey south of the Alps, their scouts reported that though they were unsure of the strength of the Italians as fighters, they saw that their numbers were great and their towns well fortified. The Magyars rode back to their homeland and spent the winter in preparation for a more substantial campaign. According to Liutprand, they spent these months making armour, sharpening their weapons and training their young men with military exercises. The next spring they returned to Italy, passing through the regions of Aquileia, Verona and Pavia.

Berengar, Carolingian king of northern Italy, had never even heard of the Magyars. Nevertheless, he quickly raised a force from his subjects that outnumbered the invaders three to one. Confronted by such an army, the Hungarians chose flight rather than fight, and swam across the river Adda before the might of the Italian warriors. Many Magyars were drowned in the panic and those who clambered up onto the other bank offered to return all their booty to the Christians. The Italians felt insulted and rejected this sign of weakness.

The Magyars further retreated to the plains around Verona. There, an Italian vanguard caught up with them. In the skirmish, the cocksure Italians were thrashed. But mindful of the rest of the army, the Hungarians again trekked homeward. Finally, their horses exhausted, the Magyars were forced to make camp beyond the river Brenta. The Italians jeered at them from the other side of the water. Once more, the Magyars offered to surrender their captured goods, their prisoners, arms and horses. They swore never to invade Italy and offered their sons as hostages. Sensing an easy and prestigious victory, the Italians said no, 'We do not accept pleas of surrender from dogs that have already given themselves up.' Driven to despair, and seeing no better way out, the Hungarians readied themselves for combat: they had nothing to lose for 'to fall fighting like men is not to die, but to live.'

As was their manner, the Magyars took the offensive. Crossing the river surreptitiously, they surprised the Italians while the latter were resting and eating. Dismounted and scattered among their tents, they were easy prey for the Magyars. Some Italians, though equipped and ready, held back from the fray, seeing that the Magyars were conveniently annihilating their rivals. The Hungarians gave no quarter.



Warrior wearing lamellar armour and steel helmet.





Central Asian warriors, 8th century, wearing a mixture of mail and lamellar armour. Painting by Richard Hook.

On the death of King Conrad (Louis' successor), the Magyars again decided on a show of strength. The election of a German king was a crucial time for the Hungarians as a new monarch frequently chose to begin his reign by refusing to continue any regular tribute. They therefore advanced into the territory of the Saxon king Henry, the new overlord of the Germans. Henry was ill at the time, but regardless of this he gathered a strong force about him: all men above the age of 13 were required to render him military service. Meanwhile, the Magyars had crossed the Saxon border enslaving women and children, and massacring all men as a warning of their ruthlessness. Magyar scouts came across the Saxon

army assembled at Merseburg and at once rode back to their masters. Henry decided to deliver the message personally and his army moved swiftly upon the raiders.

Before the two forces clashed, the Kyrie eleison of the Christian Germans rang out: 'Lord have mercy upon us'. The heathens countered with an awesome battle-chant. By now, used to the damaging tactics of the Hungarian horse-archers, King Henry ordered his horse-warriors to advance together, and not let those with faster mounts dash ahead and be swallowed up by the Magyar horde. As they thundered forward, the Magyars let fly with their arrows. Expecting this, the Saxons raised their shields and caught the first volley upon them. Spurring their horses onwards,

the Germans endeavoured to reach the Magyars before they could unleash another deadly cloud. Such tactics sound more impressive than they really were for surely the raising of a shield to protect oneself from arrows was commonsense. Perhaps it was the sense of order that was new. With the heavily clad Saxons crashing towards them, the Magyars suddenly lost their courage and broke before the onslaught. The Hungarian raiders had been checked. This battle and the previous defeat of King Louis were placed by Liutprand at the beginning of both kings' reigns, giving the Magyars a good excuse for their raids. Later historians, however, have generally placed these battles around 910 and 933 respectively.

### Smashing the raiders

With the German states proving too hot for comfort, the Magyars turned southwards again. In 924, a large Hungarian force invaded Italy and amidst the carnage, Pavia was burnt to the ground—Liutprand's town of birth. Times had changed, however, and western warlords were no longer willing meekly to pay tribute. Otto, another vigorous Saxon king, caught some Magyar raiders in a marsh along the Lower Elbe and savaged them. Never again would Saxony hear the hoof-beats of the Hungarians. Later, the Bavarians followed this up by smashing the raiders on their frontier and then plunging into Magyar territory. Hungarian encampments were ran-sacked. This time it was Magyar women and children who became part of the intensive slave trade practised by both heathen and Christian warlords.

Determined to end their bad luck, the Magyars broke in upon a civil war between German princes in 954 and rode through Bavaria and into France in a major show of strength. Predictably, as the Magyars passed through, various feuding German factions could not resist trying to employ them on their side, but this time the nomads would not be diverted from their task. Unintentionally, this invasion strengthened the hand of Otto for he now marched into Bavaria at the head of a liberating army, determined to forget party politics and confront the common foe. Missing each other, the Magyars returned to their homeland determined to repeat the action.

The Hungarian horde that entered Bavaria in 955 was the biggest that central Europe had seen for many years. It seemed as if the Magyars wanted to settle once and for all their right to range unrestricted across Europe. That summer they swarmed around the city of





Avar bronze-gilt spurs decorated with heads wearing helmets, 9th century.

Augsburg, the site of a previous victory. After denuding the surrounding districts, they approached the walls of the city with siege-engines; once again demonstrating that steppe warriors were no less sophisticated militarily than their town-dwelling opponents. With earthworks dug, tents pitched, the massive machines were pushed forward by Slav slaves whipped from behind. Suddenly the siege came to a halt. News had reached the Magyars that an army led by Otto was fast approaching. They readied themselves for battle.

With Saxons, Bavarians, Franconians, Swabians and Bohemians riding beneath his banners, Otto made camp near the river Lech, a tributary of the Danube. Bolstered by warriors slipping out of Augsburg and numerous Slav auxiliaries, the German forces probably numbered about 5,000. Calling together their raiding parties with the aid of smoke signals, the Magyars were commonly believed to outnumber the Germans. That night, a fast was ordered among the Christians to prepare them spiritually for the coming combat: many warriors were probably too tense to eat anyway.

On the morning of battle, the German warlords swore allegiance to each other. Many a conflict in the past had been lost through rivals holding back in the expectation of their competitors being wiped out by the enemy. The Christian host then said mass and advanced with lances and standards held high. They rode forward in eight groups, according to nationality. Otto's Saxons moved beneath the banner of Saint Michael, the heavenly vanquisher of the Devil. With the Lech to the left of them, its banks overgrown with foliage, the Germans did not notice a contingent of Magyars moving rapidly

along their flank on the other side of the river. These Magyars then crossed the river and set upon the end group of Germans guarding the army's baggage train.

With arrows hissing about them and the Hungarians howling like wolves, the Bohemian and Swabian rearguard faltered and fled. Disaster seemed to have struck Otto at once. With fighting already encountered in front and now a third of his army routed in the rear, encirclement appeared imminent.

Desperately, Otto despatched Duke Conrad to deal with the crisis behind him. Conrad was a bold and well-respected leader and his presence rallied the remaining Franconians. They counter-attacked and freed many prisoners from the Magyars who had become diverted from battle by the task of carrying away their booty. The crux of the battle now switched to the front. Here, according to a speech put into the mouth of Otto by the chronicler Widukind, the Saxon King encouraged his men with the fact that the Magyars were not as well equipped. 'They surpass us, I know, in numbers,' gasped Otto, 'but neither in weapons nor in courage. We know also that they are quite without the help of God, which is of the greatest comfort to us.'

It is unlikely that anyone could have heard such a brave speech amidst the clamour and clang of fighting. But was it true? Certainly, leading German warriors would have been wrapped in mail, with heavy shields, helmets, lances and swords. While, as steppe warriors, the Magyars may well have been more lightly armoured: depending more on the efficiency of their bows. However, most warriors at this time in both Europe and Asia wore mail, while as professional

plunderers the Magyars would have been armed with the very best weapons and armour. Indeed, much of their armoury would have been the same as that of the Germans, for it was from them that the Magyars had stolen it. But whatever the relative strength in arms, the advantage in spirit and morale seems to have shifted to the Germans, who charged the Magyars successfully.

### Hero of the battle

In the hard slog of hand to hand, the bravest warriors of both sides clashed fiercely while others turned and ran. It was a hot summer day and in the heat of combat, Conrad, hero of the battle, loosened the mail around his helmet. At once, an Hungarian arrow flashed through the air and struck him in the throat. He choked and fell from his horse. But now, even the strongest of the Magyar warriors were overwhelmed by the triumphant Germans, and they joined the general rout. Leaping into the river Lech, some drowned when the bank on the opposite side collapsed under their weight. Others hid in outlying villages, but were surrounded and cremated within the huts.

High with victory, the Germans pursued the fleeing Magyars over the next two days. Hungarian noblemen laden with gold necklaces and silver cruciform bosses on their shields were captured and hanged like common criminals. It was this ruthless follow up to the victory on the Lechfeld that was decisive in breaking the back of the Magyars. Unfortunately for the natives of Augsburg, it was also this orgy of man-hunting that achieved a local destruction as bad as any inflicted by the Hungarians. Nevertheless, the action did bring an end to the Magyar raids.

Leaderless and with so many warriors lying dead and mutilated on the trails of Bavaria back to the eastern plains, the Magyars never again invaded German territories. The Magyars had lost their fury. Over future generations, Hungary became a settled European kingdom where Bavarian missionaries carried out a successful task of conversion. By the end of the 10th century, it was the Hungarians who were sending tributes to the Germans. The prestige of Otto and his dynasty rose considerably as a result of this victory. Acknowledging the end of a great Eurasian menace, the Byzantines sent him presents of congratulation and called him 'emperor'. From the jealous guardians, of the Eastern Roman Empire, this was high praise indeed •



# Great Military Artists



Cavalry Column Crossing a Ford in 1885, by Zogbaum.

## Rufus Zogbaum

**R**ufus Fairchild Zogbaum, born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1849 was an important and successful naval and military illustrator of service life in the United States. He studied art in New York and the German University of Heidelberg. While in Paris working with Leon Bonat in 1880-82, he was greatly influenced by the current French school of martial paintings. 'During my time in Paris,' he wrote, 'I saw the work of De Neuville and Detaille and that decided me to paint military scenes. I had already seen something of war, having been in Europe during the Franco-German War, and having travelled a good deal in Russia, Germany, and England.'

### Kipling poem

On his return to the States in 1883, Harper's New Monthly Magazine published his illustrated article on the European scene, 'War Pictures in Times of Peace', the first of many such military

features for both Harper's Monthly and Harper's Weekly. In 1884, he went to Montana to record service life on the frontier, the first of several trips west. He contributed illustrations for 'Battles and Leaders of the Civil War' published by the Century Company in 1887.

In 1888, Harper's combined ten of his articles in book form, 'Horse, Foot, and Dragoons,' which he dedicated to the West Point Army mess, of which he was an honorary member. He was a frequent exhibitor at the American Water Colour Society, showing nine pictures between 1882 and 1891. He won a medal for his work at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

Zogbaum also produced illustrated articles, mostly for Scribner's Magazine, on all aspects of naval life and history; this maritime interest would last for the rest of his career. In 1898, he was an eyewitness reporter of the Spanish-American War and exhibited some dramatic works in oil, including

'Commodore Dewey at the Battle of Manila Bay', showing Dewey standing in an exposed position on his flagship Olympia, directing the course of action.

During this period, the artist met Rudyard Kipling, who created a poem in honour of his new friend: 'Zogbaum draws with a pencil/and I do things with a pen... Zogbaum can handle the shadows/and I can handle my style...' The artist continued to work and travel into his final years. He was in Vera Cruz during the troubles with Mexico in 1916. He died in 1925 aged 76. His paintings hang in museums and some are preserved in the Naval War Collection. His murals can be seen in the state capitol at St. Paul, Minnesota, 'The First Minnesota Regiment at the Battle of Gettysburg', in the Federal Building in Cleveland, Ohio, 'The Battle of Lake Erie', and the Woolworth Building, New York City, 'Hail and Farewell' •

*Peter Newark*



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# Re-enactors

## Winged Warriors

PHILIPP ELLIOT-WRIGHT discovers re-enactors of some of the most spectacular warriors in the world.



**T**here can be little doubt that the Polish winged 'husaria' (hussar in Polish), who dominated the battlefields of central Europe during the 17th century, were visually some of the most striking cavalry to ever take the field. Their ornate arms and armour left a lasting impression on friend and foe alike and they became an icon of Poland thereafter. In 1683, the Polish King, Jan III Sobieski at the head of over 3000 husaria led possibly the largest cavalry charge in history when 20,000 Polish, Austrian and German horsemen crushed the Ottoman Army besieging Vienna and forever halted further Turkish encroachment of Central Europe. During the Second World War, a stylised stencilled rendition of the husaria cavalry helmet and wings in black and orange was used by the Polish 1st Armoured Division serving with the British Army in the critical phase of the breakout from Normandy in August 1944. Despite the challenge of recreating such a complex impression, both within modern Poland and numerous other countries, groups are now re-enacting these legendary warriors.

### Bandits

Whilst there were references to husaria in Polish sources from the late 14th century, these were generally foreign mercenaries from Balkans who acted as scouts without the encumbrance of any armour. Despite the widely held belief that the term hussar came from Hungarian as a derivative of the word husz meaning 20, it actually came from the Slavic word gussar meaning bandit, as these early hussars were little better than such. In Poland, their role was

to act as light cavalry in support of the traditionally armoured Polish knights. However, during the early 17th century, the Polish husaria began to diverge from the lightly armoured counterparts in Hungary and elsewhere. The latter evolved the ornately laced clothing of the 18th and 19th century hussars familiar to Western armies. The former though adopted plate armour in the style of the cuirasses of the 1630s. The cuirass and arm guards were often richly decorated with gold and silver inlay. In addition, they added the distinctive 'wings' to the back of their armour.

The use of decorative displays on armour was hardly new and was not limited to Europe. In Japan, Samurai attached the distinctive banners of their respective clan to the back of their armour. However, none reached the spectacular scale of the now mostly native Polish nobility who made up the ranks of these elite troopers. A pair of wooden arcs fringed with eagle feathers were attached to the back of the armoured cuirass, the former being painted with colourful and ornate decoration. Although the function of these wings has been much debated, suggestions ranging from defences against sword cuts through to status symbols, psychologically they impressed friends and intimidated foes with the magnitude of their stunning visual impact. Animal furs and bright capes were commonly worn draped over the rider's shoulders as an integral part of this visual impact. Their mounts were also part of the display, each being equipped with brightly coloured shabraque, richly embroidered reins and leatherwork, often further embellished

with ornate hanging. The combination of steel cuirass, distinctive kapalin helmet with its nose-guard, elongated neck guard and plume-holder for securing an impressive display of feathers, along with colourful feathered wings, cloaks and horse-furniture, ensured the Polish husaria were uniquely distinctive.

### Challenge

Re-enacting these stunning horsemen is a challenge. In modern Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine (originally the expanse of the 17th century Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom), there are various groups, and individuals in both England and America keen to portray these legendary horsemen. Any mounted portrayal is expensive, there being the double expense of clothing and equipment for both rider and horse. When plate armour is added to the equation, along with the arsenal of weapons carried by the husaria, yet more money must be spent, an accurate impression costs thousands of pounds. Finally, there is the challenge of the wings, not necessarily in terms of cost, they are simply wood and feathers, but in terms of riding in steel armour with these attached to ones back whilst balancing a wooden lance in the right hand and holding the reins with the left.

Of the numerous re-enactments involving recreated husaria, one of the most dramatic is staged each year in the Ukrainian city of Kamyanets-Podilsky by the group Terra Heroica, the city having being the site of numerous dramatic battles between the Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian on one side and the Ottoman Turks and Cossacks on the other •





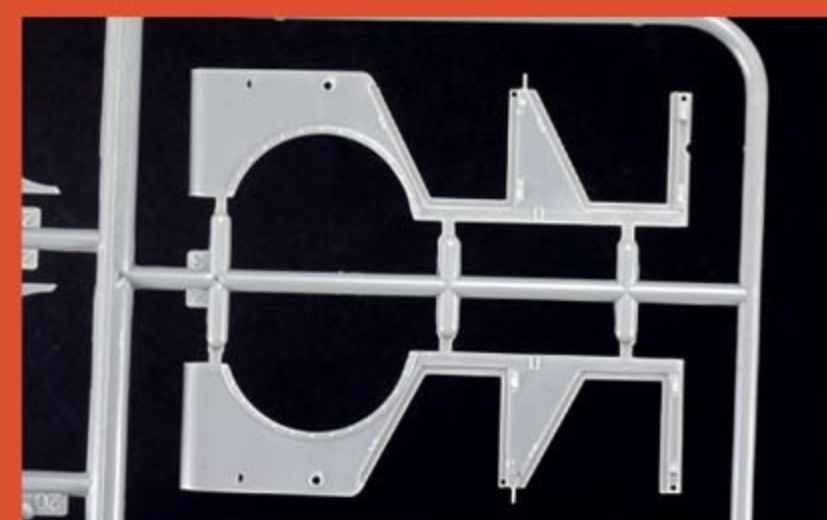
## UTILITY VEHICLE, GERMAN STYLE!

**FINE MOLDS 1:35 TYPE 94 6-WHEELED TRUCK  
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Marcus Nicholls examines ICM's recent Stöwer Kfz.1 in 1:35

**T**his is an all new model of the WW2 German Stöwer Kfz.1 and it's a lovely little thing, detailed fully inside and out with a extensive number of parts in grey and clear polystyrene. The vehicle was very widely used by the German ground forces of WW2 and examples will be seen from Europe to Russia and north Africa, giving great modelling potential and there's plenty of opportunity to convert the kit to a radio car, ambulance and even an anti-aircraft vehicle with the 'zwilling's sockel' twin MG34 installation (check out [www.zwillingssockel.com](http://www.zwillingssockel.com) for details of this).

The kit includes a very nicely detailed engine, exhaust, drivetrain and fully depicted suspension, all affixed to a ladder chassis. The cabin floor features a realistic non-slip texture and the bucket-type seats appear accurate. The engine bonnet has separate panels to show off the engine and the firewall is represented here too. The kit only comes with a 'hood up' option but they've done a good job with it; perhaps a little more texture could have added, but that's easy enough for the modeller to do. Four decal options are provided, all for RAL7021 Panzergrau machines during and after Barbarossa. Available from [www.creativemodels.co.uk](http://www.creativemodels.co.uk) •





**Indian flintlock blunderbuss, 19th century, with excessive flared barrel, £1,080. (Bonhams)**



## No Lack of Buyers

In these days of low interest rates and poor financial prospects, there are signs of a growth in investment collecting. Here, the item is purchased not on its basic interest but with the idea of it holding its value in the future. One result of this is a higher demand for top quality pieces and there is a consequent increase in prices paid. This may well have been the case with a sale at Bonhams, London, in July.

fine tiger's head making £2,880, although a crocodile failed to make its estimate of £500-£700. Top price for a sporting gun was £26,400, paid for a cased pair of Purdey 12 bore guns, estimated at £10,000-£15,000, but any gun by the firm of Purdey is seen as the Rolls Royce of the gun world.

As always, the 280 lots of antique arms and armour offered a wide range of items and were well presented in a top quality

catalogue fully illustrated in colour. The first section offered some Japanese

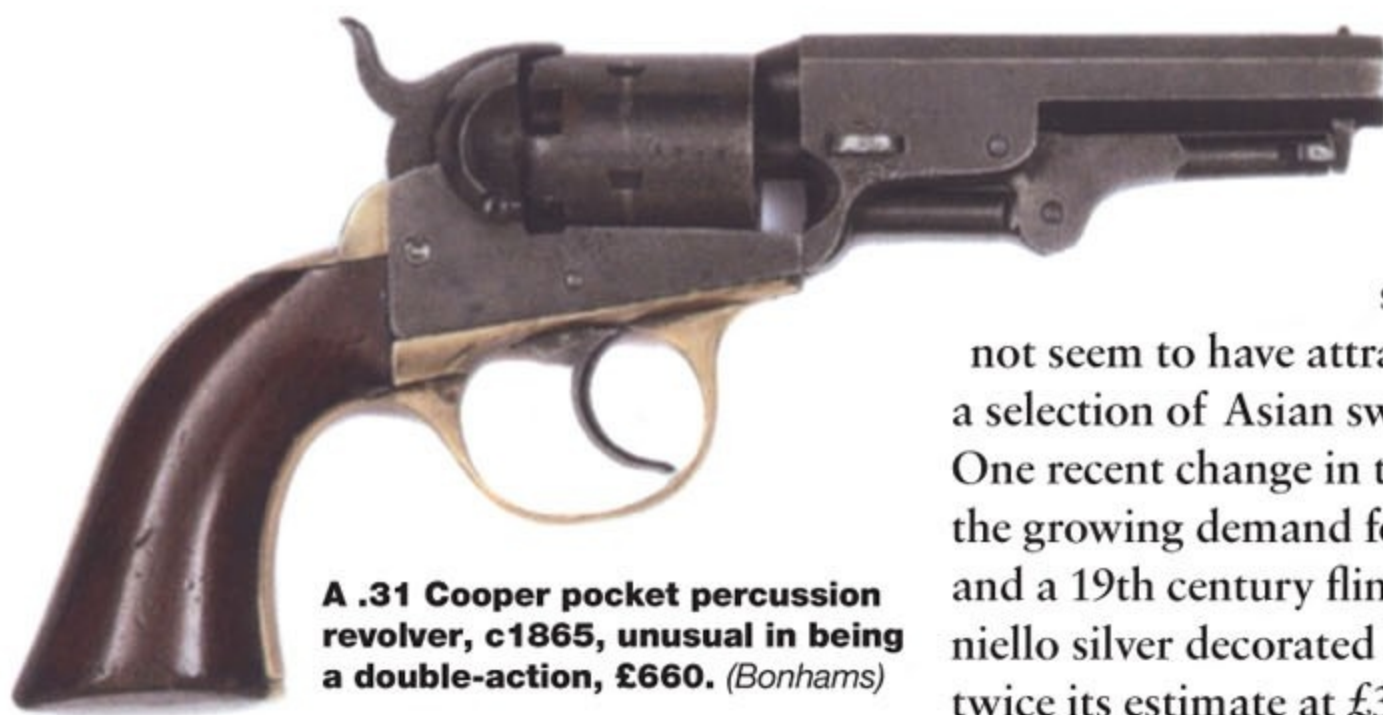
swords, which do not seem to have attracted buyers, and a selection of Asian swords and armour. One recent change in the market has been the growing demand for Balkan material and a 19th century flintlock pistol with niello silver decorated stock sold for nearly twice its estimate at £3,120, against a top estimate of £1,800.

action in 1806. These highly decorative swords were presented to various officers in recognition of particular outstanding actions during the Napoleonic Wars and are highly prized, and highly priced, by collectors. They were graded in value and this was the £50 one.

Anointer unusual item of naval interest was a Colt 1862 Model Police percussion revolver once owned by a naval Lieutenant of the Confederate Navy. He served on the famous Alabama, which ran the Northern Naval blockade as well as raiding Union shipping but was eventually sunk in 1863. Complete with its leather holster, it sold for £12,000.

On offer was a selection of pole arms, which despite their interest are not the most popular of items as their length makes them difficult to display in a modern house or flat. The most expensive was £600.

The catalogue alone cost £20 but considering its size, quality and future value as a reference this is not that expensive and it is always worthwhile



**A .31 Cooper pocket percussion revolver, c1865, unusual in being a double-action, £660. (Bonhams)**

### Sporting guns

It opened with a section of modern sporting guns and there was no lack of buyers with prices well exceeding estimates. A cased Webley WG Model 1889 revolver was estimated at £1000-£1500 and sold for £4800. Handguns such as this may not be owned by the general public in Britain so that it is a very limited home market but, of course, they may well be in demand overseas with the result that our heritage is diminished.

Although very much out of fashion and deemed to be very unacceptable, a group of game trophies sold well, with a



**Bridle gauntlet, mid-17th century, unusual in having its internal leather glove, £3,360. (Bonhams)**

### Patriotic sword

The top price of £36,000 went for a Lloyd's Patriotic sword, awarded to Lieutenant Sir William Parker for an

getting copies of the sales catalogues. If it is simply a matter of knowing what is in a forthcoming sale most rooms offer the catalogue on line as well as a subsequent sale result list •



# Museums & Shows

## Royal Lincolnshires

JOHN NORRIS visits a regimental museum in Lincoln

**W**ith seven VCs to its credit, The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment has a fine tradition of service spanning 325 years. Raised in 1685, Grenville's Regiment, as it was then known, saw its first engagement several years later at Steenkirk in 1692. Twelve years later it saw service at the battle of Blenheim in 1704. By the time of the battle of Bunker Hill in 1775, the regiment was called the 10th Regiment of Foot. Further name changes came over the years and it was not until 1946 that it was given the title Royal Lincolnshire Regiment. These titles are explained at The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment Museum, The Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Burton Road, Lincoln, LN1 3LY, along with so

much else of the regiment's history.

### Flirty tank

The present museum was created in the tercentenary year of the regiment's history and today displays many artefacts from its long list of campaigns, which are commemorated in the battle honours, with those gained during the First World War featuring with particular prominence. Out of a total of 842 men in the 10th Battalion, known as the 'Grimsby Chums', which fought at La Boisselle on 1 July 1916, the first day of the Somme, the battalion suffered 502 casualties. The church of St James in Grimsby has a memorial to the battalion and in Lincoln Cathedral there is also a memorial to the regiment.

Other battalions were heavily engaged equally in various actions, gaining three VCs as they went. Indeed, the museum is proud to mark this period by having a Mark IV tank, nicknamed 'Flirt', to form part of the display telling the history of the war. The close association with the city of Lincoln dates back to 1782, proven by the various memorials in the city, including one to the regiment in St Mathias's Church.

The museum has a research facility available on written request and extensive records from the First World War are held on file. The museum shop stocks a number of related titles and there is full disabled access to the site. For full details of hours of opening telephone 01522 528448 or visit [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## November UK Diary

### ■ 1: Monday

The Stockport Militaria Collectors Society is being presented with a talk entitled The War Artists with guest speaker Les Bell at the meeting being held at the Britannia Hotel, Dialstone Lane, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6AG. Meeting commences at 7.45pm. Further details telephone 01709 557622 or visit [www.stockportmilitaria.org](http://www.stockportmilitaria.org)

### ■ 4: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Janina Struk presenting a talk entitled 'Private Pictures; Soldiers' Inside View of War'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### ■ 6: Saturday

Arms, Medal and Militaria Fair is being held in the Rivington Suite, Horwich Leisure Centre, Victoria Road, Horwich, Bolton BL6 5PY. Further details telephone 01423 780759 or visit [www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk](http://www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk)

### ■ 7: Sunday

Malvern Military Convention organised by the Military Vehicle Trust. Further details telephone 01743 762266.

### ■ 7-8: Sunday and Monday

Living History Event is being held at the Derby University, Kedlestone Road, Derby. Militaria stalls, vehicles and displays. Further details [mp.promotions@uwclub.net](mailto:mp.promotions@uwclub.net)

### ■ 11: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest

speaker Julie Summers presenting a talk entitled 'The Making of Modern remembrance'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### ■ 12-14: Friday to Sunday

The Original Re-enactors Market is being held at the Sports Connexion, Leamington Road, Ryton on Dunsmore CV8 3FL. Further details telephone 024 7630 6155 or visit [www.greenactorsmarket.co.uk](http://www.greenactorsmarket.co.uk)

### ■ 13: Saturday

Coventry Transport Museum is hosting a 70th anniversary event to commemorate the Coventry Blitz. Vehicles built in the town will feature to mark the occasion. Further details telephone 02476 234270.

### ■ 14: Sunday

Arms and Armour Fair at the Historic Dockyard at Chatham in Kent ME4 4TZ. Further details telephone 07595 511981 or visit [www.chathamarmyfair.co.uk](http://www.chathamarmyfair.co.uk)

Brooklands Military Vehicle Day in Weybridge, Surrey. Further details telephone 07898 833895.

### ■ 18: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Jonathan Berry presenting a talk entitled '20th Century Military Sites in Wales'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### ■ 21: Sunday

The Bristol Branch of the BMSS is hosting the

annual Bugle Call Model show at the Pavilion Hall in Bath—the largest military modelling show in the South West. Open from 10am. Further details email: [elanlane13@tesco.net](mailto:elanlane13@tesco.net)

### ■ 25: Thursday

Lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London with guest speaker Jules Stewart presenting a talk entitled 'The British Experience of the North West Frontier'. Presentation begins at 12.30pm. Further details telephone 020 7730 0717 or visit [www.national-army-museum.ac.uk](http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk)

### ■ 27: Saturday

1940s Event is being held at the Town Hall in Welshpool, mid-Wales. Vehicles and displays from the period. Further details telephone 07782 166342.

### ■ 28: Sunday

Arms, Medal and Militaria Fair is being held at the Village Hotel, Whiston, Liverpool L35 1RZ. Doors open between 10am and 3pm. Further details telephone 01423 780759 or visit [www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk](http://www.northernarmsfairs.co.uk)

Militaria and Medal Fair at Yate Leisure Centre, Kennedy Way, Yate, near Chipping Sodbury, Bristol BS37 4DQ. Doors open between 10.30am and 2.30pm. Further details telephone 01753 534777.

All modelling societies, war gaming clubs, re-enactment units and museums are invited to send news and details of their special events to:

John Norris, 1 Porters Hatch Close, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9SB.

They can also be E-mailed to:

[john.norris3@btinternet.com](mailto:john.norris3@btinternet.com) where they will be included in this monthly list.



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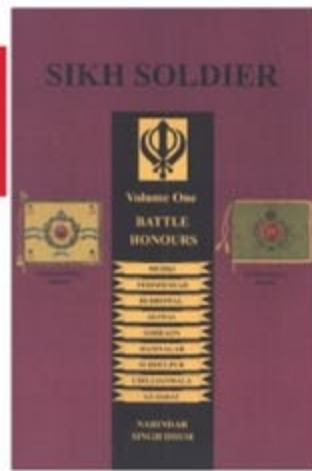


# Book Reviews

## Sikh Soldier Battle Honours

by Narindar Singh Dhesi (Naval and Military Press), softback, £11.95;

**Sikh Soldier Gallantry Awards** by Narindar Singh Dhesi (Naval and Military Press), softback, £14.95



The first volume documents the complete collection of the Regimental Battle Honours won by the Sikh soldiers whilst serving in the British Indian Army and later the Indian Army after India's independence. The book records all the Battle Honours, won by the Sikh soldier, including those that have been declared repugnant to the modern Indian sentiment. Through these listings, Narindar Singh Dhesi pays tribute to the courage and self-sacrifice of the Sikh soldiers. He has meticulously researched his material and there is not a similar book in this genre available that provides as much detail and information. It is an important and vital addition to the collections of avid aficionados of Sikh martial history.

The book begins with a short introduction explaining the tradition of Battle Honours and goes on to explain the origins of the Nishan Sahib, the holy flag of the Sikh faith and the Khanda, which is the symbol shown on all Sikh flags. Next Narindar writes the Antecedents giving the background of the Sikh homeland – the Punjab – and its native people. He explains the transformation of the Sikh people into a fierce military brotherhood whose distinguishing feature was their tradition of reckless valour. They came to believe in the triumph of the cause as an article of faith and asked for no nobler end than a death on the battlefield. Following chapters detail the rise and fall of the Sikh Kingdom and Sikh soldier fighting under the British colours.

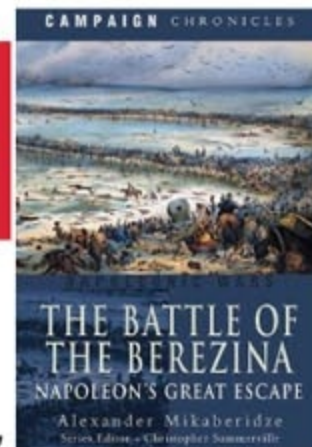
The second volume documents Gallantry awards won by Sikh soldiers, prior to and following India's independence. Through these listings, Narindar Singh Dhesi pays tribute to the courage and self-sacrifice of Sikh soldiers. A large part of the book takes the reader through various gallantry awards,

starting with the highest decoration – the Victoria Cross and ending with the Indian gallantry award of Shaurya Chakra. Five Sikh soldiers received the VC, Nand Singh being the only Indian soldier to be awarded both the Victoria Cross and Mahavir Chakra (MVC), which is the second highest military award for valour in India. Sepoy Ishar Singh earned a unique 'peacetime' VC in 1922 for his gallantry and devotion to duty. The author, Narindar Singh Dhesi has dedicated a page to each of the five courageous men and he graphically describes the battle that each one fought and the circumstances that earned them the Victoria Cross.

Graham Watkins

## The Battle of the Berezina: Napoleon's Great Escape

by Alexander Mikaberidze (Pen & Sword) 284pp, hardback, £19.99



In November 1812, three Russian armies had Napoleon's already depleted and exhausted forces pinned against a river in difficult and marshy ground. How on earth did the emperor manage to extract his battered Grande Armée? For some it was an act of rather belated genius, although Russian historians preferred to lay the blame upon one of their commanders, Admiral Chichagov, for letting the French and their allies escape.

This account is both lucid and detailed, explaining the movement of the forces at strategic, operational and often, fascinatingly at tactical level, in order to explore the events of the campaign. The mapping is particularly helpful, and allied with some detailed orbats it would be possible to wargame several of the actions in order to see if events could have turned out differently.

The survival of Napoleon's army depended in the end, of course, on the less romantic actions of the engineers and pontonniers who made the river crossing possible. As ever, in real warfare, planning, logistics and engineering expertise often trumps the decisions of commanders; but is clear that the Russians

missed a great opportunity to annihilate the invaders. The narrative is full of stories of great ingenuity and bravery, on both sides. Perhaps it is unusual to write a book about a victory lost and defeat largely avoided, but this book is well worth reading for that very reason.

Matthew Bennett

## The Rise of Militant Islam

by Anthony Tucker-Jones (Pen & Sword)

237pp, hardback, £19.99

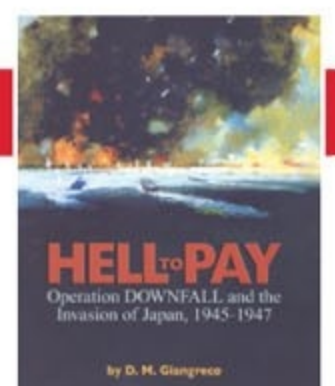


An excellent overview of global jihad by a regular contributor to MI. The author traces the history of recent events in Somalia, Yemen, Bosnia, Algeria, Chechnya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, explaining the network of Islamic terrorist organisations. An interesting chapter investigates the links between Saddam Hussein and Islamic terrorism, revealing how Baghdad sheltering Al-Qaeda leader al-Zarqawi. All in all, a fascinating summary of the threat posed by militant Islam.

Tim Newark

## Hell to Pay

by DM Giangreco (Naval Institute Press) 416pp, hardback, £25.00



Operation Downfall was the proposed plans for the American invasion of Japan in 1945. It showed how a series of amphibious landings would be required to conquer the island and that the expected casualties would dwarf those at D-Day in Normandy. Some historians have claimed that this was exaggerated but Giangreco, looking at several fresh sources shows that the Americans military claims were justified and thus explained the use of atom bombs rather than endure massive casualties. A terrifying insight into the Armageddon that could have been.

Peter Marriot



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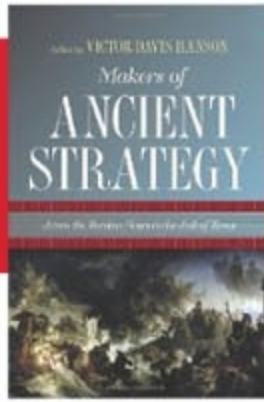


# Book Reviews

## Makers of Ancient Strategy from the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome

edited by Victor Davis Hanson (Princeton University Press)

265pp, hardback, £19.95



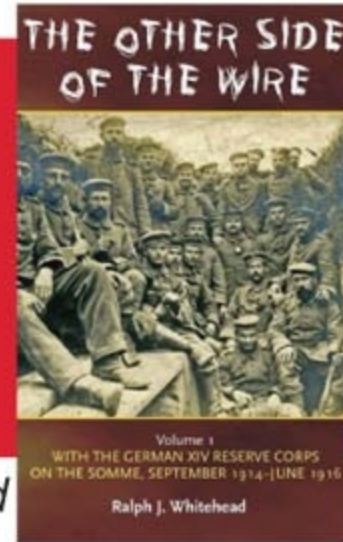
This collection of ten essays is named after a classic military history text: *Makers of Military Strategy*: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (1986), although it does not reach the same heights. The contributors' brief is to consider ancient events in a modern context. Susan Mattern's piece on 'Counterinsurgency and the Enemies of Rome' is both convincing and relevant to current operations. Adrian Goldsworthy muses on military dictatorship in 'Julius Caesar and the General as State' although he considers the first emperor, Augustus, much more ruthless. Peter Heather discovers 'Newton's Third Law of Empires': that neighbours will learn how to be competitors and then conquerors. John Lee reminds us that urban warfare has a long history and that ethical behaviour legitimises military action in such a complex environment.

In brief: Holland's piece on propaganda in the Graeco-Persian Wars is slight; Berkey on the Long Walls of Athens, is solid; Worthington sees Alexander as another Persian Great King; Strauss considers Spartacus as a proto-Mujahideen; and Kagan admires Pericles as a clever imperialist than those Athenians who followed him. Finally, the editor looks at the doctrine of pre-emptive war through the Theban general Epaminondas' campaign against Sparta. His modern parallel, unsurprisingly, is the 2003 invasion of Iraq, of which he is blandly uncritical. Perhaps he could have recalled Thucydides report of the Athenians advising the Melian allies of Sparta: 'the strong exercise their power to achieve what they want and the weak have to accept it'. This is surely the eternal strategic truth.

Matthew Bennett

## The Other Side of the Wire, Vol1, with the German XIV Reserve Corps on the Somme, September 1914-1916

by Ralph J. Whitehead (Casemate) 656pp, hardback, £37.50



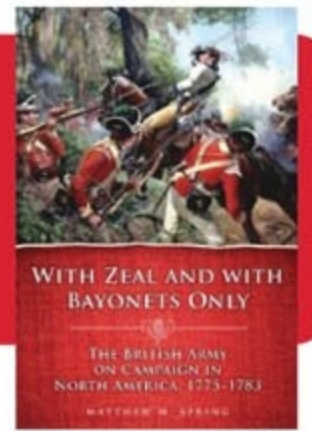
World War One has been a popular topic for military historians since at least the 1960s; but only recently have there begun to appear detailed studies, in English, on the German enemy. This book is an information-packed survey of a single, rather unfashionable formation of Reserve Artillery. There are dozens of photographs of its members, at arms, on parade, in the trenches and in memorial pictures of the dead. Many faces wear beards and moustaches of the era that have an almost comic, stuck-on look. All this goes to humanise the dreaded 'Hun', ordinary men like the Tommies who opposed them, caught up in a holocaust that they neither wished for nor deserved. An example of this humanity is the anecdote of a young, idealistic Lieutenant saving the life of a French soldier cut off behind German lines and threatened with execution as a spy.

The first volume takes the activities of XIV Corps' component regiments up to the initial stages of the Somme July 1916 Allied offensive. These are well-illustrated by maps and diagrams and give especial insights into the trenches and other defences built to counter the British attacks. Almost 100 of the book's pages are given over to casualty lists and there is touching appendix dedicated to Landwehrman Jakob Hoenes, who is pictured drinking beer with his comrades in 1915 and as an excavated skeleton discovered by the Great War Archaeological Group in 2003. This is a compelling book and should be read by anyone broadminded enough to want to know about what happened on 'the other side of the wire'.

Matthew Bennett

## With Zeal and with Bayonets Only: the British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783

by Matthew H Spring (University of Oklahoma Press) 381pp, paperback, \$19.95



The American War of Independence attracts many studies of American arms, but too few of the British. This excellent tactical study, with an emphasis on the use of infantry, as the title indicates, considers why the British Army preferred shock to firepower, contrary to the image of the Redcoats as a well-drilled machine for delivering musketry. A major reason, it transpires was the low-regard in which it held its 'rebel' enemy, whose officers were no gentlemen and who fought in a 'skulking, cowardly manner' (p.134)! Another was that British musketry was not what it has been cracked up to be, and anyway, the speed of advance of trained troops was often so swift as to mean that the riflemen opposing them could get off no more than two shots in an open field. Unfortunately, the American militia unsportingly used field defences and wooded terrain to good effect, negating the impact of the bayonet charge.

This book is a publication of the author's 2001 PhD, and at times the dense writing shows as much; but within the detail there are riches indeed. It is strange that he does not seem to know of the late lamented Paddy Griffith's idea of 'tactical snipping' in order to discover how an army really fought (as opposed to what the drill-book said), since this is epitomised by Spring's approach. Three campaign maps together with diagrams of formations and three fascinating (if notional) British deployments, illustrate the volume well. This is a must have for anyone seeking to understand the warfare of the period.

Matthew Bennett

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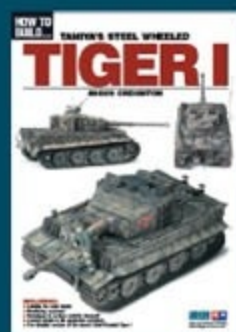
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